

The
Place of Jesus
in the
Life of Today
+
Henry Kingman



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Kingman, Henry, 1863-1921.
The place of Jesus in the
life of today

THE PLACE OF JESUS IN THE LIFE OF TODAY

A Series of Unconventional Talks on
Some Present Day Realities
of the Christian Religion

By HENRY KINGMAN

*Author of "Building on Rock," "Way of Honor," and
"The Faith of a Middle-Aged Man"*



ASSOCIATION PRESS

NEW YORK: 347 MADISON AVENUE

1922

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	v
HENRY KINGMAN, A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH . .	vii
A GOSPEL FOR TODAY	i
THE BRINGER OF LOVE	8
THE LEADER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS	34
AS ARBITER OF DEBATED THINGS	51
THE BRINGER OF THE KINGDOM	67
JESUS AS AN OUTSTRETCHED HAND	84

PREFACE

Old religions, stranded here and there among the oblivious years, are a common sight. Names of divinities that once shook the world have now to be looked up in books of reference. Clever writers tell us that the religion of Jesus is already laboring among the shallows, and will soon be hard aground, never again to move under its own power.

We believe, on the contrary, that the Christian faith pulsates with the power and wonder and beauty of the God of Life, and that the personality of Jesus is—to human experience—the living center of its glory. All that is sweetest and best in human life still finds its source in Him.

These papers are written to give expression to this conviction, that is as sunshine to the soul. They are not so much an argument as a testimony. Obviously they are not for the scholars or theologians, but for the ordinary people who have to live and suffer without much comfort of philosophy or mystical experience. They are the witness of one who—though plagued with doubt and somewhat beaten on by disappointment—has yet found life more and more taking on the cast of gratitude to Jesus Christ for the difference He has made.

HENRY KINGMAN

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

By George Irving

While Henry Kingman does not need any *written* memorial a full life of him should be prepared. All too few records are made of lives whose talents and opportunities, while above the average, are yet not so far in advance of the rank and file of us as to discourage any possibilities of emulation.

There is at least one other good reason why such a life should be written which will appear more fully I hope as this sketch proceeds. Henry Kingman was a hero. He was victorious in one of the very fiercest fights ever waged by a mortal.

Henry Kingman was born in Boston, in 1863. He died in Claremont, Cal., April 15, 1921. He was born into a home of substantial comfort and thorough culture—facts which left their mark on all his days, for Henry Kingman is more frequently described by those who knew him best as “God’s Gentleman” than by any other term.

In 1880 he entered Colby College, Maine, which he chose because of his father’s friendship for the president, Dr. Henry B. Robins. Dean Shailer Mathews, a class-mate of Kingman’s in Colby and a warm personal friend to the end of his life, says of his college days: “Henry Kingman came from a family with traditions. His grandfather was Dr. Rufus Anderson, for many years Secretary of the American Board, and his father was a mer-

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

chant of standing in Boston. He brought to the college a natural sense of superiority—a quality justified by his natural abilities as well as social standing. He never went into athletics in any prominent way, but was among the first to organize tennis, then a new game and quite unknown in our little college town. But he was a prodigious walker and would tire the best of us.

“His vitality was exuberant. I do not remember ever knowing a young man who seemed so radiant with health and animal spirits. I recall that once he persuaded some of the little group to which we both belonged to sleep out one rainy night. I was too cautious to follow his lead, but the campus for days abounded in stories of how the irrepressible youth slept in a tree after having failed to find protection in a camp on a rainy night.”

This reference to his exuberant vitality makes illuminating reading for the friends of the last twenty years of Henry Kingman's life, when he carried with him a body beset by what to many another good man would have been overpowering weakness. How little the college students whom he delighted to watch in their games and contests realized that, even though now in critical health, he was a few short years before the equal of any of them in the oft-quoted “pep” to which they gave such a high regard. Often have I seen a quizzical smile pass over the face of “the Bishop,” as several of his intimates affectionately called him, when some boisterous young physical Samson would dilate on the absolute necessity of perfect health as a basis of any sort of success in life.

His college course during which he was, in the opinion of a well known classmate, “on the whole the most potent influence for good in the college,” was followed by

three years of study in Hartford Theological Seminary. Here his exuberant spirit continued. A college mate says he was at the bottom of most of the pranks at the Seminary. During his college course he spent one summer vacation as a home missionary in Michigan among the copper mines. "His letters," writes a friend of those and later days, "were a characteristic exposition of both sides of his nature. He was ready to work with the spirit of a martyr but he missed the joyous life he lived when among people of culture and wealth."

In 1886 he went to North China as a missionary of the American Board. His decision to become a foreign missionary was made, I believe, because it was for him "the way of honor." No man could have possessed and enjoyed more the rich associations and unmistakable opportunities that were his among his own people. He elected to go to China because he saw there a difficult field that unmistakably called for workers. For ten years he threw himself into that service. One who was in a position to observe his work says that "he soon came to the front as one of the most trusted and influential workers." Early in his Chinese career he married Miss Annie Lees, daughter of a distinguished missionary of the London Mission Society and the union was a perfect one in every respect. Of the three children from this marriage who grew to maturity, two are today missionaries in China. Could any commentary on the life of parents be stronger than this living witness to their unselfish devotion to the cause of their Lord?

On being invalided home from China, Kingman spent some time in Southern California, and while still a very sick man, was called to the pastorate of the Congregational Church in Claremont, California. This church, which is the only one of any character in the home of

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Pomona College, is unique in many respects. Usually over a score of different denominations are represented in its active membership. As a rule there have been during the last fifteen years over twenty-five retired clergymen and furloughed missionaries in the congregation. In addition the faculty of Pomona College, with hundreds of its students, regularly worshipped in this church. This was an audience to draw the very best out of any man. To Henry Kingman with a mind tempered and sharpened like a Damascus blade it came as a ringing challenge. One who was an officer of the church during many years of Dr. Kingman's pastorate makes this true characterization of his preaching: "To the virility of his thought, the logic of which was inescapable, were added charm and brilliance of diction of unfailing attractiveness. Apart from their moral and spiritual appeal, his sermons were models of English—not the studied productions of a mere master of rhetoric, but the natural outgoings of a mind of rare genius."

He had himself passed through periods when his faith was tested as by fire. He was so made that he must ever seek the fullest light possible on any subject under consideration. His brilliant, well-trained mind delighted in his stimulating audience. Occasionally it would seem as though he had himself gone so far beyond the experience of most of his hearers that they could not fully follow him, but his perfect diction, his capacity to express his ideas with a clarity and a nicety which was the despair of fellow preachers, his unfailing good taste in apt quotation and illustration, carried the interest of his hearers on the rare occasions when they could not keep abreast of him in his spiritual journey. Almost always he read his sermons, but so splendidly did he master the

art of pulpit reading it never hampered his freest delivery.

While Henry Kingman scorned "to play safe" in theology or in anything else, he was alike impatient of those on the one hand who think they have achieved a static faith and on the other those who are ever "proving all things" and never holding fast to that which is good. He was profoundly indignant with any one who would lead young people into academic bogs and towards intellectual will-o'-the-wisps.

The life of a small college town while abnormal is vividly interesting. In matters of religion it is much like living in the measles ward of a contagious hospital. Always the students are the same age and perennially are they breaking out with first one mental disturbance and another. To many, naturally and properly, continuous questions come concerning their religious faith. Others have heard that "College men and women are haunted by doubts" and forthwith proceed to be so "haunted." With each group this Christian scholar was sympathetic, patient, and eager to be helpful.

One who had close intellectual and spiritual fellowship with him writes discriminately: "To his fingertips, Dr. Kingman was a modern in his thinking. He kept abreast of the world's best literature; and was a keen observer of the great world movements. His judgment-values of men, of books and things were greatly prized by his friends. In his theology he was a progressive; but he was too wise and careful a thinker to discard the garnered treasures of the past. While an evangelical in spirit he was often sorely baffled concerning the commonly accepted formulas of the evangelical faith; and clung to the Cross while perplexed regarding some of its

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

orthodox interpretations. His faith was implicit rather than explicit. His charming little book, 'Building on Rock,' is an epitome of his religion. Its very title suggests that there were certain things of which he felt sure; and in which he found a final resting place for the soul."

More than any but a few of those whom I have ever met, Henry Kingman delighted in the refinements of life. He was one of the fortunate ones who could maintain a proper balance in his appreciation of the material and spiritual gifts. A classmate has pointed out that in college he was known, especially at first, as aloof. That quality followed him to the end of life. This was intensified by his physical limitations. Longing for comradeship and friendly relationship he was never able to be hail fellow. Those who were so fortunate as to get behind his involuntarily raised barrier of shy reserve found a large, rich, full comradeship that is rarely if ever equalled and never surpassed in human friendship. In spite of and sometimes because of this reserve, hundreds of students, now scattered to the ends of the earth, came into helpful relation to this great heart in a frail body. President Blaisdell of Pomona College, of which our friend was a trustee and unfailing supporter, has written: "I have never known a man whose mere presence, shut into a sick room, dominated a community as did the spirit of Henry Kingman."

With this demand for sincerity, there was coupled an almost terrifying power of sarcasm. Sad indeed was the plight of the luckless one against whom it was directed. His satire never burned without a good reason and then rarely. As one of his warmest friends, Rev. James M. Campbell, has written, "His power of sarcasm and invective was something 'uncanny,' but with the pass-

ing years his spirit grew sweeter and mellow, and he had but little use for these dangerous weapons. His eyes could flash with fire, but the prevailing expression was that of gentleness and tenderness. His smile was a caress. He was just the kind of man to whom one can instinctively turn for sympathy when in trouble and for advice when in perplexity." Never have I known any man who was more consistently impatient of all that bordered on sham and humbug.

In 1908 the church, having grown greatly in size and demands on the pastor, decided to call an assistant. By an interesting series of Providences I was led to that post in November of that year. In all the range of religious work it is doubtful if any other relationship gives such an opportunity to test the real quality of men. For almost five years we worked together with perfect sympathy and growing understanding. In this relationship how often did I see demonstrated Kingman's fine conception of honor and steel-true loyalty to a friend and colleague. With his own meager strength constantly draining away he might have been excused if at times he became impatient of those whose physical vigor was constantly increasing. But no such feeling ever existed. He was ever the soul of generosity. Probably there is no way in which a true man can be detected more quickly than by his relation to those associated with him in junior positions. A truly big man is ever eager to see that those about him receive more than their own share of the credit for anything that is done. By this standard Henry Kingman's life was absolutely faultless. He was, in the phrase which was often on his lips, "a true Christian knight."

Harry Emerson Fosdick, who visited the college after illness had nearly finished its work with the body of our

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

friend, has this to say about him: "Dr. Kingman was one of the most gracious, Christian gentlemen whom I have ever met, combining delicacy with power, spiritual insight with moral courage in an unusual way. George Eliot says somewhere that some people are like a quotation from the Bible in the midst of a newspaper paragraph. I think of Dr. Kingman as deserving to have this said about him. Delightfully human and simple in his friendliness, there always was a height about his spirit and a purity about his insights that made one feel that he must be living signally close to the Eternal Spirit."

The Reverend James M. Campbell, whom I have already quoted, writes further with restraint and insight about some of the qualities of his friend:

"Perhaps the most outstanding quality in his character was his indomitable courage. A braver soul I never knew. He was a true knight-errant of the Cross. Of a certain Greek poet it was said that he wrote of the sublime and was himself the sublime of which he wrote. Our friend wrote of the heroic and was himself the heroic of which he wrote. His sermons were autobiographical. They rang with the note of victory. He himself lived on the victorious side of life, triumphing over bodily weakness and pain, concealing his own suffering, and entering into sympathy with the troubles and sufferings of others, as if he had none of his own."

Nothing could more completely reveal the true life of this radiant, heroic, chivalric spirit than the following comments on and notations from his letters and diary furnished by his son, Harry L. Kingman, now a missionary in China, who as a college undergraduate won his letter in every field of athletics and became nationally known as a base-ball player.

"He kept up his courage and happiness and love in spite of great bodily weakness. His diary shows that he sometimes suffered great secret depression because of his ever-increasing asthma but he concealed it. In March 1920 he wrote in the diary which he kept for over thirty years: 'Dreadful month of asthma. Cannot see way out.' Dec. 3—'Very great shrinking from being sick again.' Dec. 10—'Unprecedented night of sweet sleep.' A week before he died, his sister-in-law said to him, 'Henry, I suppose you will just go on playing the game and putting up a brave fight.' 'What else is there to do?' he said with his sweet, wistful smile. He often visited sick people when very miserable himself. April 28, 1920, he wrote in his diary—'Wish I could do something of use.' Two days before death he wrote in scarcely legible hand, 'In shadow of death from 1 A. M. Doctor thought I could not rally.' It seemed as though he was chuckling in his weakness at again having slipped out of death's fingers as he had done so many times before. He was always joking whimsically about his weakness. A year ago he took charge of the church for a few weeks in the summer. He wrote me, 'And now I am in charge for a few weeks and am putting up a bluff at being a live wire. Mother and I are calling on new families and I am advertised to preach five times in the next four weeks. It will be a great joy if only my strength is equal to it. It hasn't been for six weeks past, but the fine weather ought to make a difference. The trouble is almost more with the thinking than the actual preaching, as on so many days I am like a mud-turtle for lack of quiet sleep, and it is hard to read a thoughtful book. Mending stockings has been nearer my size intellectually. I am polishing up the auto, one morsel at a time—an eye today, an ear tomor-

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

row, the back of the neck or a hand the day after, and so on until by the eye of faith I can see a clean car in the near future.'

"He was a good sport and understood us in a way that helped greatly. He wrote me recently 'It is fine that you can keep up your athletic practice. It is a splendid corrective for too much introspection, and should give you the fresh personal contacts that are so necessary to keep a man wholesome and natural. One simply can't get too much sunshine in his spirit, so long as it doesn't bleach out his stern, strenuous obedience to the call of duty; and I hope you'll never have less enjoyment of the good things of life than you have today.'

"Many entries in his diary show his worldwide sympathy. He suffered when there was famine in China or plague in India. He was almost too sympathetic and patient in the weaknesses and shortcomings of his children for their own good.

"He was the soul of honor. Whether it had to do with large sums of money or only the question of using some one else's commutation ticket there was no wavering or hesitating as to which way he should go. The Way of Honor was the only way that he knew. Of speaking in public he wrote me 'One must be above all else honest and sincere. Don't let enthusiasm or zeal lead you to exaggerate or over-color. Prune your best passages severely, so that men won't feel you are putting it on thick, but that you have reserves of truth behind.'

"In China he translated in two years a much needed 'Harmony of the Gospels,' but it was destroyed in the Boxer uprising before anyone had seen it. He never bewailed the loss. I hadn't even heard of it until recently. Mother told me last week that as a young man he was a

fine swimmer. He must have known that it would have impressed me greatly had he told me, as I always revered any sort of physical prowess, but never did he mention it. He was so widely read that at home he might well have spoken autocratically, and have imposed his beliefs and ideas on his children, but he did not do so. Just after his book 'Building on Rock' was published he wrote me, 'It was a real comfort to read your words of appreciation of the little book, because I was not sure whether the work was worth the doing. Over and over again I was inclined to give it up because it seemed so dull and commonplace—and yours was the first judgment about it that has reached me. So I thanked God and took courage. It is not easy to satisfy myself now, and whatever I do is done at the expense of an inordinate amount of labor. Fortunately that doesn't matter much, because I have time enough and more.'

"He had unlimited faith in God and also in man. Dr. Stoughton, who attended him in his last illness, said father's deathbed was unique in his experience, in its joy and faith and hope. Of his last summer's sermons he wrote: 'I am afraid that I never get out of the rut of a single topic in these days, and that all my talks are merely variations upon one theme. But people never seem to get tired of listening, and it occupies my thought so largely to the exclusion of other things that I make no effort at originality. The miracle of God's love in our poor failing lives is a wonder of which people never tire of hearing.' In another letter he wrote me, 'There is not the slightest question in my mind that—however one may account for it—the greatest joy and the greatest efficiency in life are found in a close alliance with Jesus Christ. All sorts of things puzzle me and perhaps grow nebulous

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

with years, but of this central fact of experience I have no doubt—the mercy of God comes to one through faith in Jesus and in His message. And don't be at all concerned at the inevitable fluctuations in your own responsiveness to this truth—its reality and fruitfulness are happily independent of our changing physical conditions.'

"A short time ago he wrote me, ' You ask how I would express my theory of Father and Son. I would never try. Any time this last twenty years I should have been so sensible of being quite beyond my depth, that I should avoid discussing the question if possible. When one asks if Jesus was of the same *eternal substance* as the Father—if he was God in that sense—I realize that I don't know what I am talking about. I can only affirm that Jesus and His friends all agreed in affirming about Him—that He was the God-man—that "God was in Him, reconciling the world to Himself"—that He and the Father were one—that He was the perfect expression and revelation of God—that when we find Him we find God—that He has the "value of God" for us. But not one nor all of these affirmations seems to me to declare or explain His metaphysical relation with God. I shrink from calling Him "God" even as He never called Himself by that name; Master and Lord seem to satisfy me; the other term I reserve for clearness sake, for the Eternal and Almighty. But, there as soon as I begin discussing it I fall into difficulties. I rest in the fact that I find God in Him and through Him, and that He came to bring men to God. I feel sure that any doctrine that men have fought over so fiercely for centuries, never able to understand it or explain themselves to others of differing views, and one where even the necessary terminology of discussion requires a keen and highly trained mind to grasp the thought,

can never be of the *essentials* of faith and religion. A little child can smile back at Jesus, with an eternal submission of His will to the God who expresses Himself in Him. But the Trinity! I merely lose myself helplessly and painfully in the effort to grasp its content.' "

In spite of increasing physical weakness Henry Kingman lived vividly and gladly to the very end. On the morning he died, just before the end came, he returned to consciousness to find Mrs. Kingman weeping by his bedside. On asking her why she was weeping she replied that she could not let him go. "Is that what it is?" he asked. In reply to the unarticulated affirmative, with the smile that was so characteristic of his whole life, he replied, "Then it is inexpressibly beautiful." With these brave words, so characteristic of him, upon his lips this triumphant warrior of the Lord Jesus Christ laid down his sword at his Master's feet. Like that other radiant spirit who had much the same physical burden to carry he could have said, "Gladly I have lived and gladly I'll die, and I lay me down with a will." In one of his last published sermons, delivered only a few months before his death, in speaking on the text "One thing I do, I press forward," he quotes a couplet which is truly autobiographic:

"The handles of my plow are wet
The shares with rust are spoiled
And yet, and yet my God, my God
Keep me from turning back."

God answered his prayer.

CHAPTER I

A GOSPEL FOR TODAY

A thoughtful man today—whether in Wall Street or on the Arabian desert—cannot long be forgetful of the problems of God and life. Interest in them are a part of his manhood. And if he is honest as well as thoughtful, he does not want to get away from them, because his highest welfare seems somehow to be bound up with their solution. From time to time, in moments of unwonted spiritual attention and discernment, the consciousness of God wells up in him as from some unplumbed depth of reality in his own being, and troubles him with questions he cannot answer. What does it all mean? What is the relation of this tantalizing, incomplete human life to the illimitable life of God? How near can He come to us across the unbridged unseen? Can our weakness draw in any way upon His strength, or our troubles find comfort in His help?

Questions such as these, that may have been curiously indifferent to us once, press in upon us with hungry insistence as years go by and we are made to feel how slight our hold upon earth's sunshine is. And never does such a question thrust itself on our attention but we are brought, whether we will or no, face to face with the personality of Jesus Christ. What He once said and did and was has taken such hold on the thought and conscience of mankind, that we cannot think of God, or of

the way in which His life may touch our lives, without thinking in terms of Jesus' experience and teaching. The clarity of His insight in these matters so far outruns anything else of which we have any knowledge in the world of religious literature, that it cannot honestly be ignored, if we are to think of them at all.

And so it happens that the association of Jesus with the life of today is as inevitable as the human hunger for some knowledge of the unfathomable abysses of life and death that hem us in. Sooner or later, out of our depth or need, we cry out for light, for understanding—and there stands this Jesus, of ancient Nazareth, professing to offer just the knowledge that we want. What are we to make of Him? What are we, who are caught so helplessly in the intellectual currents of the twentieth century, to do with this Teacher of the first century in Asia? Half of our present-day literature, we may say, seems to ignore Him as constituting any factor in the thinking of our time. And yet He makes profound appeal to all in us that is most divine. What place has He among the forces that are actually moulding society today?

It is easy to give to questions such as these conventional answers out of the past, such as once seemed to settle the matter with authority and to silence discussion.

But in point of fact the familiar answer of authority simply does not engage the interest of the young people of this generation. It does not meet them intellectually where they are—it fails of their respect as well as of their sympathy, as though it were an evasion of honest inquiry. This is true whether we think of the young men and women in our colleges, or of such a vast and representative gathering of the average men of today as was assem-

bled in camps and trenches during the war. No official pronouncement out of the distant past, whether from an infallible church or an infallible book, can any longer be relied upon to make friendly connection with the modern point of view, or satisfy the critical search for truth that has become the intellectual habit of our generation, and that—critical and unsparing though it be—is nowhere more fittingly employed than in seeking for the greatest truth of all.

When we set ourselves to think who Jesus was, and what He is to the present-day society, we may—because of early training and unshakable convictions—be quite content with an interpretation of His person and message, couched in forms and habits of thought belonging to an age so remote and unfamiliar as to have passed altogether out of the understanding of the common people of our Western world. To us it may be all living and significant, inexpressibly dear and sacred, also, through its associations. But the fact that some of us have been trained from childhood to understand and appreciate this Hebrew imagery should not make us forgetful of the needs of the ordinary man of today who has had no such training—one of the eighty per cent of the men of Great Britain not in touch with the church—and who is often irritated by his utter inability to relate church teachings to the matter-of-fact world of reality in which he lives. As Canon Barnett, apostle to the East End, said to his Anglican friends, out of his deep sympathy for the poor of Whitechapel, “We who feel the charm of the old words and phrases need to compel ourselves to remember that this feeling is not shared by the majority.” He urged on his associates the need of simple intelligible expression

of the great truths, because even the best of men in our day are for the most part "too hurried to look for a meaning which is not on the surface."

Jesus spoke His undying message in terms so simple and universal in their interest as to appeal equally to the untaught Syrian peasant of the old world, and to the university student of our day. The stories of the prodigal son, the lost sheep, the lilies, and the sparrows, the man with the talent in a napkin—the pictures of pride and humility and service also—are as vivid and eloquent now as when He uttered them. They deal with primitive and elemental phases of human experience, in its many-sided relation with the will of God. The great thing He tried to accomplish with men astray from God was so pathetically simple as compared with the demands of the Thirty-nine Articles, or the Nicene Creed, that even the social derelicts of His day could grasp His intent and fulfil it. And the great vital realities that the man in the street today needs to know and feel, are so unembarrassed and unconfused with metaphysical problems or theological subtleties, that they must admit of very plain and unconventional statements, suited for practical and busy men. As one of the leading philosophers of today has said, "Subtle religion is false religion." The truth about religion cannot be in itself obscure or intricate—it corresponds too closely with our most elemental instincts for its expression to be limited to a single type of traditional presentation, however sacred.

And so it must be possible, if we choose, to discuss the whole question of the teaching of Jesus and His place in modern thought and life with a range and freedom quite unembarrassed by traditional limitations. It is by no means necessary to confine ourselves to an in-

terpretation of the view-point of the first generation of Christian disciples, as in a study of the New Testament. Such an interpretation is of course indispensable. But the field of experience has enormously widened since that day. Unhesitating acceptance of Jesus' leadership was a pure experiment then—it needed a bold and trustful heart indeed to step out on that untried way. The mental reaction upon it of men like Peter and John and Paul was that of men facing a problem bewilderingly new and strange. Since their day, however, it has been tested and tried and weighed and examined in the laboratory of life in every conceivable way. Millions of earnest men and women have lent the undivided energy of their souls to its understanding. In every imaginable mortal stress, men have trusted the so-called gospel of Jesus, and we have the age-long record of their venture of faith. Surely a humble, thoughtful man in this twentieth century must have before him a range of facts in illumination of the mission of Jesus that Paul never knew, together with whole worlds of spiritual experience that lay below any horizon he could see, beyond the horizon of his age.

Of course it is worse than futile—it is disastrous—to try to meet the need of our own day for a gospel that meets men where they are, that appeals to them so as to compel attention, by dropping out of sight the eternal realities of redeeming love and forgiving compassion, and preaching instead, not the Jewish law, but a new and better law suited for the twentieth century—a law of service. Of course it is intelligible and interesting—it is divine and beautiful and most truly Christian, and the conscience yields assent. But it no more meets men's immemorial hunger for God and for the daily refreshment of His undimmed love and mercy, than the call to pay our

debts assures us of a comfortable income. Men are as ready as they ever were to listen intently to the realities of the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ. But the truth today best wins a hearing if it is in a form easy to be grasped—if it seems to be a part of the everyday world in which we live, and not of a religious shadow-land of venerable antiquity.

The following studies are a fragmentary contribution to the effort at the re-appraisal of Jesus with which the men and women of our generation are engaged. They are an interpretation of human experience—a discussion of the significance of Jesus for our world—not from the standpoint of the Church or even of the New Testament, but of an ordinary man of today, reacting on all that life has to offer towards a conclusion, from the open-air talks of Jesus in the calm of Galilee to the deadly struggle of the World War in Europe. It is, to be sure, absurdly fragmentary and inadequate as an interpretation, in view of the infinite wonder and mystery of the subject. But so far as it goes, it deals with realities that the human heart thrills to believe and of which it is a joy to speak with confidence.

Note.—There are two assumptions that underlie the whole of the following discussions: (1) That we have today in the New Testament an indisputable record of the great outlines of the life and teaching of Jesus. After all allowance has been made for sane sceptical criticism, the picture that remains is unchanged in its essential features of incomparable and compelling power. Neither peasant nor pedant of his day had the religious genius to alter substantially the outlines of that supreme personality. There are disputable points, of course, where sure conclusions may not be within our reach. But in the fields we are about to traverse, we walk with a sure step, without apology or hesitation. (2) That the only contact of Jesus with our time is by way of men's faith in Him. His influence is manifestly a spiritual influence, and the only way it can possibly be brought

to bear is through the lives of those who are willing to receive it. His place in any society, as in any individual life, is sharply limited by the response accorded Him—whether of sympathy or indifference or critical doubt. It would seem to go without saying that His power over anyone for good must be proportioned to one's confidence in Him, not to the correctness of one's theological beliefs, but to the genuineness of his faith in Jesus as a revealer of God. Only as men or nations believe in Him, does he bring to them the benefits of which we speak.

CHAPTER II

THE BRINGER OF LOVE

Let us go straight to the heart of our subject at the beginning, and speak of Jesus as the great bringer of love into the life of today. We cannot get closer to the reality of life, to the actual operative forces of the universe we know, than when we come to the power of love. There are all sorts of natural forces about us by means of which we can work wonders for human comfort, and we are apt to be a bit overawed by the overwhelming evidences of their value and power in the development of modern civilization. But not one nor all of them together can preserve the civilization whose material welfare they have built up, or keep it from falling back into moral chaos. They have not the sublime energy in highest spheres of development to enable them to deal with human hearts, as electricity, e. g., deals with so many refractory materials. Half the homes in Europe are bitter with misery or want today, or bitterer still with hatred and fear and spiritual bankruptcy; and all the resources of science are unequal to bringing them back to brotherhood and joy.

But love can do it. Wherever you see a trace of it in action in the desolated area, you see a ray of hope breaking through the pall of misery. But it is the only natural power of such divine efficiency with human souls

as to give any promise in face of so bewildering a task.

When we talk about love, then, we are not dealing with mere pious emotion or airy sentiment, but with a reality as irresistible in its power as the half-invisible flame of the oxy-acetylene torch—only in immeasurably wider and more delicate relations. If the place of Jesus in the life of today is inseparably associated with a productive energy like this, then it is a place of power indeed. And as a matter of fact and commonest observation it is so associated, as cause with effect—where the influence of Jesus comes, there love springs up. Many common folk, perplexed with various doubts, rest on that unshakable fact with great comfort of spirit.

There is no sort of doubt as to what Jesus did for the people of his own brief time—He brought love home to their lives. The most notable thing He did for them was not primarily to bring them comforting words about divine benevolence, or new ideas as to the need of love in social relations, but the very substance of love itself. This was an altogether astonishing thing for a great sage or rabbi to do. It was too homely and human to be profound, or startling, or original, as the founder of a religion is supposed to be. Anyone, not a genius, can be kind and compassionate. And yet the chief distinction of Jesus was that He warmed with love hearts that were dead and cold as burned-out cinders, and brought them back to life and God. Many of the hated profiteers and plunderers of His day, both men and women, were curiously affected by this divine friendliness that could not be hidden nor mistaken. It was almost ridiculous that they should be attracted to a perfectly unselfish man, a preacher of righteousness. It was an utterly incon-

gruous association. But they were attracted to Jesus because they saw He loved them, and yet was good. The scribes and Pharisees went up and down the streets, fairly exhaling the odor of sanctity: but just in proportion to their righteousness they were cold as ice to the sinners of the town. Love and religion made queer company to their thinking. But Jesus brought a new thing to the light of day—a kind of religion that actually expressed itself in sympathy with objectionable people. He broke down their defences against goodness before they knew where they were: and He carried this so far that He became known as the friend of undesirable citizens.

In one way it is easy to understand. It was simply that He was so human—not like the religious leaders of his day and most days. He understood people better than they understood themselves. And seeing how much of the divine was in them, marking them out as God's, He linked Himself to it as with hooks of steel and tried to draw them back to their Father.. It was a strange fascinating phenomenon in the religious world, to which men gave different explanations.

Jesus Himself gave it an explanation. And here the inexhaustible mystery and wonder that have always clung about His person assert themselves at once. He claimed that He brought love into life for the astounding reason that He came from the Almighty God. He set the door of heaven ajar, and the light that came through was that of fervent compassion for human sorrow.

The religious leaders of His day protested fiercely, as at blasphemy against the national Jehovah. The holier men were, the wider of necessity was the gulf between them and the rabble of the unlearned and unclean: and as for the ignorant worshippers of idols, they were fitting fuel

for God's wrath. But the face of Jesus was as wistfully kind to the unclean as to the clean, and to the ignorant as to the learned. Whatever else was perplexing about His mission, this at least was clear, that He turned the light of God on the drab life of the common people, and lo and behold! it was a light tremulous with the deep colors of pity and love and sacrifice.

We talk of it with glib familiarity, as though the Western world had always believed it. Yet when, in rare moments of spiritual illumination, we catch a fleeting glimpse of its reality, that He who is behind all things regards us as Jesus regarded those poor straying men and women in His day, what glory and wonder our human life takes on! One would hardly be afraid of life or death if Jesus were right.

It was a most winsome propaganda while it lasted—strangely merciful and unworldly to venture out into open competition with the cold wisdom of this world. But it lasted—as one might say—only through one long summer day, and then night overtook the loving face and the friendly voice, and they disappeared forever from among men. So far as men could see, only the memory of that face and voice remained, in the minds of a few peasant friends—no book, no school, no written word, only the memory of a divine love searching out human need, transitory as a wind in the forest that rustles the leaves and then is forgotten. Whatever power of self-propagation that love might have, it was left to a few loyal hearts in the midst of the sinister selfishness of their age. One would have thought it would run out quickly—say in three generations at the most: like a mountain stream lost in desert sands. A faith, a conviction, a life, so largely interwoven with emotion, would

quickly run into strange forms and pass on into other manifestations, and so be superseded. Even if left to itself, it might be trusted soon to disappear, just because of its delicacy and unworldly beauty in an impossible setting—like a rare exotic, doomed to degenerate among common weeds.

But the little circle of friends of the friendly man was not even left to itself. As it grew, it ran into perils incredible, unimaginable—unending in number and variety. It lived amid hostile forces, like a lamb in a forest haunted by a wolf-pack. The blood-rusted *ungulæ* themselves—sharp claws of iron, used by the Roman magistrates to tear the flesh of accused Christians—were not so cruel as the dangers that sprung up from among themselves. The lingering influence of Jesus was not only smothered in blood, it was crushed with bigotry, it was volatilized in argument.

And yet, as so shrewd a publicist and man of the world as the genial Col. Watterson of Kentucky said only the other day, “The teaching and example of the Prince of Peace have been engulfed beneath oceans of ignorance and superstition through two thousand years of embittered controversy”; but “never in the history of the world was Jesus of Nazareth so interesting and predominant” as now.

In spite of all our pessimisms this fact is clear as the sun. Jesus means more to the men of today than He ever did to the men of Judea. Bitter as the bigotry and strife have been, all the more starvingly eager is the wistful hungriness of men for what He still brings to life. His own inner circle of friends was bigoted and quarrelsome, even when He was with them; and again and again He had to call them back to humble, unselfish

brotherliness. And today His call is just as thrillingly clear and inevitable that any who follow Him should be "tenderhearted, humble-minded, forgiving one another." The incomparably urgent need of society today is for just what Jesus brings—self-mastery for the ends of love. The nations of the twentieth century need for their development food and clothing and labor, and the raw materials of coal and iron and oil and cotton: but they may have all these in abundance and yet stagger backward till civilization is drowned in night. But the spirit of Jesus, love and good-will and self-restraint, will carry on the human race to ever higher stages of development. The process of development in creation may be hindered and brought to a stand in our own century by the self-assertion of human instincts that ally us with the animals: but in Jesus we find the very force needed to carry on creation to its consummation.

One stands in amazement before this fact. We have become so used to hear Jesus spoken of in terms of patronage or indifference or unbelief, that we need to shake ourselves free of popular affectations to realize that He actually supplies to society just the constructive force that humanity needs for life and growth. The future of humanity is not with the last clever novelist who condescends to the Master. The key to advancement is with Jesus. Because moral power radiates from Him. He is the living center of operative love. That is not pious exaggeration, but prosaic fact legibly written in uncounted lives. The reality of power is here. For the purposes of unselfish service, Jesus is to men of today what the sun is to the plant world. Where He is, life is. The thrill of His example spreads far beyond the circle of those who name His name—even to Buddhists and

agnostics. And as men's hearts turn to Him in honest devotion, fresh energies are being released every day for social redemption. It is every whit as true for fishermen on the Labrador coast as it once was for fishermen under the hot skies of Galilee—the fellowship of Jesus lifts them up into touch with God and His Fatherly ways. He lets the light of heaven shine on their understanding, and straightway they see new visions and think unaccustomed thoughts of gentleness and friendliness with men.

We look to see how this result of power is actually achieved in men's lives today through the medium of Jesus' personality. Roughly speaking there are two sets of conditions that spoil and cripple life and render it ignoble and ineffective. Both of them fight against love—they inhibit its operation, and benumb and paralyze the more generous impulses of our nature. The old Babylonians had to fight with them just as do our neighbors in the next street, and no conceivable future developments of society can alter very much their hostile influence. It is the glory of Jesus that He brings in love in spite of them—even by means of them.

First of all is the eternal enemy of love in every form—sin. One shrinks from using a word so inextricably bound up with ages of odious controversies, and one so thoroughly out of taste today. But what other term describes the element we all admit in human nature that is like the moth and rust of the soul, ever at work to destroy our spiritual possessions? The common, deadly selfishness that drinks up love?

Our thinking ought to be clearer on this matter than it was ten years ago. We have had a riot of sin for years—not of the polite artistically draped indulgences

that modern society permits itself, but of the raw passions of the brute, scientifically edged and sharpened for destruction. We have drunk to the loathsome dregs the cup of that will-to-power that unblushingly disassociates itself from love and all its works. And tens of millions of innocent women and children are still suffering, day and night, because the dregs of the cup are so dreadful in their poison of death. Men have thrown away love with both hands, in utter abandonment, and they have been reaping the destruction that Jesus used to speak about in words as awful as the condition of those uncounted homes of sorrow. Here is stark reality—such as chills the blood to look at near at hand—the reality of sin.

And Jesus opposes to it the other reality, equally sure but infinitely wider in its scope and reach, the love of His Father. Here also was a cup for men to drink, He said, with no dregs of death or any disappointment whatsoever, but a cup of joy—an elixir of life. Not in any high-flown, mystical way, for emotional ecstatic natures, but in a perfectly obvious way of daily, homely operation in the common life of common people. Their Father loved them, forgave them, received them back to friendly, intimate association, so as to undercut the root of their distrust of him, and bring the evil flower of their ill-will to the ground, a wilted plant, unable to flourish in the wholesome sunlight of His goodness.

It is impossible for any one to believe heartily in Jesus without finding himself being led out into this open sunshine of God's love, as a very first step under the influence of the new Leader. We may have been a torment to ourselves and to others, because of our wrong thinking and wrong doing. An uneasy conscience is a ceaseless irritation, making a man "gey ill to live with."

But an uneasy conscience cannot live in one who trusts himself to the truth of Jesus' teaching. The poor beggared spendthrift who crept back to his father's house—in Jesus' story—was miserable enough with cankering remorse and uncertainty and shame: but all these feelings suddenly fell away into speechless gratitude, when he felt his father's arms about his neck and knew that his father loved him still. A touch of nature makes the whole world kin, and in this respect the South Sea savage reacts just as the educated Chinese scholar—Jesus actually brings them into touch with the Almighty Father of their spirits, and at this touch of sympathy the whole world alters. Forgiveness and the forsaking of what displeases Him mean, suddenly, the dawn of a new heaven and a new earth.

We see the all but incredible wonder of it in the lives of those who have forgotten what love is, who are yet brought by a miracle of kindness within the range of Jesus' influence. Years ago a young Scotchman and his wife were set ashore on the beach of the island of Tanna, in the New Hebrides, in the hope that they might be able to bring the gospel of Jesus to the natives. They were not able. The islanders were blood-thirsty savages, filthy, brutal, dangerous, and delighting in cruelty of every kind. Times past remembering they plotted murder against the man who tried to love them into a true manhood. For months he lived in the very shadow of death, familiar daily with threat of club and killing stone, musket, and spear, in the hands of furious enemies. Within four years they drove him out empty handed, leaving even his wife and little child buried there by the beach, waiting like hostages for his return.

More than thirty years later, his son, Frank Paton,

landed again on the shore of Tanna. The same crowd of naked, painted savages, with spears and guns, pressed down to meet him. Yet now he had certain aids in his work among them, and very early the work began to show results. The very chief who had once led a war party to murder his father was among the first converts. Another and another followed. Schools were begun and presently a church was formed. And when, at the end of only five years, Mr. Paton, broken in health, was forced to leave, under what conditions do you suppose he parted from them, who had been so lately—both outwardly and inwardly—like very children of the devil? “The hardest thing to bear,” he says, “was the sorrow of the people.” On the day just before his departure the church was crowded in the early morning with hundreds of those who had come to a farewell service. One stalwart man, who had become himself a teacher, spoke on the words, “Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.” With tears rolling down his face, he told them how true these words were of their own pastor, who had suffered with them and for them, and now was going away in sickness. Then the war chief, Iavis, rose, and after speaking on the verse, “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul,” begged the people to show their love for their missionary by being better Christians. Then with prayer and singing the meeting concluded.

In the moving words of Mr. Paton, “It was a dreadful parting from our people. Death would have been easier than that terrible wrench. As the steamer moved out, we watched the light in our home till it faded into the darkness, and then we went below to battle through the sorest night in all our life. We may travel far afield,

. . . but we shall never meet with nobler or more Christ-like men than Lomai and his brave fellow-teachers. They are heroes, every one of them, God's Heroes."

A great power house at Niagara is a wonderful sight, but is there anywhere a whirring dynamo whose energy is in any way comparable with the power behind those words, "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows"? The reality of love, and especially of love that suffers in silence, plays upon the hearts of men of all tribes and peoples, as the high current plays upon the lighting system of a great city. And it is undeniably in Jesus that we find the undying center of those high currents of spiritual power that lift men out of degradation and make them heroes who had been vicious cowards.

Hardly less impressive is the experience of one at the opposite end of the scale from those imbruted cannibals, one whose whole life was a seeking after God, yet barren and forlorn for lack of love to feed upon. The story of the well-known Chundra Lela, of India, throws a clear ray of light on the singular power of Jesus' influence to make love triumph over the restlessness of an uneasy conscience. Born in India, far up among the mountains of Nepal, of a priestly Brahman family, she was left a child-widow at the age of nine. Nevertheless her father gave her a careful education, and took her with him when she was but twelve years old, on her first pilgrimage to Juggernath, where he died of cholera. More and more eagerly she studied the sacred books of the Hindus, until she decided that a vision of God and forgiveness of sins would be worth more to her than anything else in the world. With this one end in view she left home with two other widows of like mind, on a long series of pilgrimages to the sacred places of India, seeking some

evidence that the Supreme Being was pleased with her worship. Thousands of miles they travelled on foot, through perils innumerable, of robbers and wild beasts and pestilence and famine, taking seven years to complete the circuit of the holy places. But no comfort came to her, nor any rest of soul, though she was now a devotee and holy woman, revered by all for her piety. Again she set out upon her fruitless quest, hungry of soul for what no temple or priest could give. This time she went far up into Assam, and there on the Brahmaputra River, surrounded on three sides by hills and forests, she lived alone for eight years, far from any human habitation, striving to gain by austerities and self-torture the approval of God she craved. Only twice in these years did she see the face of a human being, and the story of the self-inflicted torments she underwent is all but incredible to a Western mind.

The forests, like the temples, brought her no rest. She returned to India, and there for the first time learned of the Christian Bible. She secured a copy and for months studied it together with the Hindu Shasters. The story of Jesus filled her with inexpressible hope and longing, and in the end her prayers were answered and her heart overflowed with joy as she put her trust in him. She was a Christian! From that time, for more than thirty years, until her body was feeble and her hair white with age, she went up and down through northern India, known everywhere as a "holy woman," telling of the love of God that had come to her through Jesus Christ. She had found that which made her forlorn life blossom like the rose, and she gave that late blooming life utterly to Him who had brought deliverance.

The finest flower of our own type of intellectual develop-

ment is not too proud to make the same confession of loyalty to Him who has made love triumph in their lives, in spite of their own fears and failures. Witness that last word of Charles Cuthbert Hall, in which he left directions for his funeral service:

"I have indicated what shall be said and sung today because my one great longing is for the joy of witnessing in death, as I have tried to witness in life, to my adoration and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, my Lord and my God in whom I rest securely for salvation, pardon, and peace. I lie among my friends. They love me. I love them."

We read behind those simple lines the moving story of a glowing life-purpose, incandescent with the transmitted energy of love. And it is the same story that underlies that last "author's prayer" of Professor Rauschenbusch, "Pardon the frailty of thy servant, and look upon him only as he sinks his life in Jesus, his Master and Saviour."

Both of these men were intensely modern; they were alive in every fibre with social sympathies. But they bore glad witness that this love was the overflow of a life made possible only by what Jesus Christ had brought them. Their very memory is like sunshine: is there any doubt from whence that sunshine came?

Professor Rauschenbusch would have believed in Jesus in a far different way from that poor transfigured cannibal of the New Hebrides, just as Dr. Martineau and Mr. Moody and Col. Roosevelt would each have had a sharply differing view-point for regarding Him. Yet all would have agreed that Jesus made life rich and beautiful, because He set the way to God wide open in spite of sin. Jonathan Edwards made the average worldly

man feel that God was the awful Sovereign and Judge, whose wrath was the very element in which he lived. Jesus made the careless men and women of His time to feel that God—in every way—was better to them than the fathers whom they knew. If fathers were tender and forgiving toward their often wilful children, “how much more” did their Father in heaven long for their good, and welcome their stumbling efforts to return to Him. And Jesus has this place in the life of today, that, wherever men believe in His word, He makes them know that between them and God there may be a flawless sympathy. Not a half-suspicious, half-grudging toleration on His part, secured on the credit of another; but limpid natural affection, as between father and son. And every atom of its strength and purpose leads men, as they perceive it, to forsake and hate the sin that as a matter of experience shuts them out from Him. So love takes possession of them.

Even with the clear assurance of Jesus’ word, many of the best men and women of our day never come to trust God’s love as they would trust their own father’s. For them, God is not as human as Jesus, not as good as the parents of their childhood home. The old terror of the Oriental monarch still clings about Him. There is a story of a little girl who was learning to write. With laborious effort she had prepared a whole sheet of her handwriting, to show her father as a surprise. One night when he came home, his little daughter brought him her masterpiece, and with pride and joy submitted it for his approval. Several small blots were on the page, which were—even in her eyes—a disagreeable intrusion. But over these she laid her hand, saying, “Don’t see the blots, father!” What father would be deaf to

such an appeal? The spirit and purpose of her loving effort were what counted, and not the staring imperfections of her pathetic attempt to please him.

But, as many of us well know, we do not give God credit for being as good as that. We do not believe in Jesus' teaching at this point. What is called the "New England conscience" is a sorry reflection upon God's patience and sympathy with His children. If we come to God at night with the story of the day, often it is only of the blots we are thinking, and only the blots that we suppose will attract His attention. And the result is to keep always a cloud between ourselves and God, to keep us always uncertain and uneasy as to His favor, and so to rob life of the free gladness of His love. To believe in Jesus is to have a better wisdom than this, for still He assures men that all we know of human love and forbearance is but a poor reflection of what is in our Father's heart.

It is not wholly amiss to recall the street-boy's definition of a friend, as "a feller who knows all about yer, but likes yer just the same." Some of us haven't even the homely good sense to trust that God comes up to the level of a friend! We are still partly under the influence of ancestors who thought they pleased God by living in an atmosphere of sorrowful self-reproach and extravagant self-depreciation. As Jonathan Edwards said in his diary, among many similar expressions, "When I look into my heart, and take a view of my wickedness, it looks like an abyss infinitely deeper than hell." What sort of family life would be possible where the children so abased themselves in perpetual remorse for their shortcomings, they seem never to have considered. In any case, Jesus brings to men of this as of every day the

natural, wholesome life of love, in spite of sin and blundering and failure. It is only the plainest outcome of experience to affirm that there is no other name under heaven given among men that can give such assurance of eternal goodness, reaching out of the infinite unseen, to assist and beautify our familiar daily plodding through these earthly years.

But there is something gravely wrong with life besides the wrongness of men's hearts—something bewilderingly wrong and hostile. The terms of this earthly struggle for existence are not what one would expect in God's world—they are too harsh! Huxley and Spencer were after all hardly more drastic in their summing up of the mercilessness of Nature than was Paul, when he said "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." Life is kind to a chosen few: but on many sensitive hearts its forces beat like flails, bruising and benumbing with sheer pain: not kindly pain, directed to helpful uses, but senseless, useless suffering, embittering the spirit like punishment undeserved. Men strike out against it blindly, and because they see no one else to blame, they blame God. Love dies at the root, and faith with it: and God's face is hidden from them.

One remembers what Mrs. Annie Besant said to Moncure Conway, as they came out of the court-room where the judge had just taken from her the care of her little daughter—"It is a pity there isn't a God: it would do one so much good to hate him." During these last few years we have heard from bewildered hearts, tortured by the spectacle of suffering, many such utterances as this, voicing the bitterness of their distress of doubt. Dr. Fort Newton, of the City Temple in London, quotes a letter he received from one of the boys of the church

in the trenches, dated "Somewhere in Hell." One of the sentences ran as follows: "Dear Preacher, forgive me writing so. I know you will forgive, but who will forgive God? Not I—not I. This war makes one hate God. . . . He let it happen. Omnipotent! and—He let it happen. Omniscient! He knew it in advance—and he's let it happen. I hate Him. . . . You have been kinder to me than God has been."

God knows, men and women who speak like this are distraught with pain. But there are many of them thus distraught, and life for them is a feverish rebellion against things as they are. The comfort of a reassuring love passes them by, leaving them defiant and hard and often dangerous to society.

There are many more who never reach defiance, whose spirits are yet broken by misfortune. The pleasant light of life dies out and leaves them in the shadow. They are defeated by life's hardness and carry their burden heavily through dragging years, making the world a sadder place for others, because of their self-pity and discouragement. It may be sickness, or failure, or loneliness, or fear: but whatever it is—and no one can deny the strain and sorrow of it—it robs them of life's joy and shuts them out from the comfort of their Father's presence. It is wholly pitiful to think of the number of those who, for one reason or another, lead dispirited, drooping lives, without the resilience and buoyancy of love triumphant over all.

The place of Jesus is of one who brings back victory of the spirit to those who, but for Him, had been sullen and defeated or perhaps only heart-broken. It is not so easy to say just how He does it, but that He does it—for those who believe in Him—we have the grateful wit-

ness of men and women past numbering, in every walk of life and in every generation. He floods one's consciousness with the assurance on which He Himself rested in the dark, that a Father's tenderness is behind and above all distress, and that He will not let his children slip from His remembrance and good care.

They suffer—yes. Nothing interferes to save! But the suffering is not the last word. The *last* word is victory and joy and love triumphant. That is the confidence which Jesus had in His own heart when He was despised and forsaken of men, and He somehow puts it, indestructible, in the hearts of those who trust in Him. "When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me."

He does not do it by argument, or by reiterated promises. In His daily meeting with anxious men and women He must have said numberless reassuring things, soothing the sting of their sorrow and reviving their courage. But hardly a trace of them has been preserved. It is nothing less than astonishing that the three first gospels have so few utterances explaining life's hardness and affirming the compassion of God. Jesus does not even once use the word "love" of His Father, as does the Old Testament so often with deep feeling—so completely do the simple records shun any tendency to sentiment or emotion. But every day of His life unfolded the divine compassion in ways that the world will not forget, and every fresh glimpse of His calm self-possession reveals His confidence that love and not evil will win the day.

This is what makes men today stand courageously firm in circumstances where their hearts ache with trouble they can neither explain nor relieve. They might crumple up under it morally, losing faith in God and courage

for life and the spiritual victory that makes one great. It is easy to show yellow—to give up, or break down, or turn bitter. But when one sees Jesus standing over against him—like one stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted—yet undefeated, unafraid, majestic in His trusting obedience to His Father's will, then one needs no argument. This is not a "rotten world," this same world in which Jesus once went quietly to His death, triumphing by faith and love. If He rested on His Father's goodness, in spite of pain and shame surging over Him in the dark, then who are we to lose heart and faith when the hard days come and heavy clouds lie like lead upon our spirits! If He could rest on God's love to the very end, then we who believe in Him can do nothing else in our sharp trials. In any case, explain it as you will, the spirit of Jesus in human hearts today makes men look up in love and hope where, but for Him, their eyes would be bent miserably upon the ground.

Life all about us is full of instances of this reality. The heroic triumphs of spirit, maintained by love that cannot understand yet stakes all on Jesus' word, are all around us, in humble lives of which the wise world never hears. Years ago the writer well knew a young mother, glorified by pride and joy in a little daughter, her baby. Suddenly it was stricken down by infantile paralysis, and the mother, who longed to shield it from every breath of pain, had to look on, day after day and week after week, while the smiling face grew drawn and haggard with suffering. Even for friends who came in for an hour, it was a sight too sad to see. But for her, the mother, whose arms could no longer rest the little grieving daughter, it was such a way of sorrow as often makes of life a hopeless enigma of blinding disappoint-

ment. But because her spirit rested on the assurance of Jesus, when the end came she wrote her pastor:—

“We look to you to voice our gratitude for so much of beauty and delight and sweetness, which has been and still is ours. We both feel very strongly that we cannot thank the dear Father enough. . . . We know that some day the revelation will be given of what these suffering months have wrought for her. How good He has been to keep our faith through the time of mystery and darkness! In all the trial there has not been a drop of bitterness.”

If He can make love so triumphant, without strain, even in life's darkest hours, then there is a great place for Him today in the lives of men and women—perhaps even in our own.

Take from India another instance, of the place of Jesus in life's dark realities. There was a bright, happy young girl of seventeen in an Indian orphanage—popular with all, engaged to be married, delighting in a glad world. Without warning, there broke out sores upon her hands that shut her up to a living death as a leper. She was admitted to the Leper Asylum opened by that well-known friend of the forlorn, Sam Higginbottom of Allahabad. He tells of her arrival there.

“Arrived at the asylum, we all went in. It was not into the beautiful quarters we have now, but into a miserable, tumble-down collection of dilapidated mud huts, not fit for the habitation of any living thing. This fair young girl, dressed in her white clothes, looked round this fearful place, and caught sight of a group of creatures crouched under the trees. She took one look and then threw her head on her brother's shoulder and sobbed as though her heart would break. She asked: ‘Is that what

I am coming to? Am I going to be as one of those?"

A few days later, trying to comfort her, he reminded her of how much had come into her life from others to make it richer and fuller and better, and urged her to have a school for those forlorn women, and to teach them some of the hymns she knew. She agreed to try. Months afterwards she opened her heart to one of the missionary doctors:

"She said when she first went into the Leper Asylum she did not believe there was any God; or, if there were a God, He could not be a God of love and afflict any human being as He had afflicted her. 'But now,' she continued, 'every day I live I thank God he made me a leper, because as a leper He has given me a work to do for Him that otherwise I would have known nothing about.'

"As one went through the women's quarters and saw the women, clean and neat and tidy, with hope in their faces and songs in their hearts, nearly every one of them having learned to know Jesus and having confessed Him, it was evident that the consecrated life of this Indian leper girl had borne abundant fruit for the glory of God and the help of His afflicted children.

"Today, eleven years after she first entered the asylum, she is the same sweet Christian. She shows traces of the awful suffering caused by the disease, but behind the furrows of pain one sees the radiant calm of one who has found Jesus able to save."

Amid a thousand perplexities, we are sure that there is no nobler capacity in life than this, to be able to wring victory out of defeat, and to make love blossom out of conditions that breed bitterness and rebellious protest. And we find this capacity in lives all about us, rooted in a faith in Jesus. His conviction as to the divine love behind

the menacing evil, becomes their conviction. Arthur Lyttleton, British Secretary of State for the Colonies a few years since, had certain severe trials, ending with death of his little boy. But out of it all, and in spite of its bruising impact on his soul, he drew the "unalterable conviction that there is strength and beauty and glory to be won from these awful events." Our world desperately needs the forces of such an unconquerable faith in love beyond all, and we find them in fact inseparably associated with the influence of Jesus.

It would be a great mistake to suppose that His touch on the life of today is felt only as men are directly conscious of His personal agency, or as the love that refines their lives reaches them through the channel of ecstatic or mystical feeling. It would no doubt be a wonderful and convincing experience to have a new world dawn on one as it did on Paul, or Chundra Lela, or thousands of other twice-born souls, as through the direct, personal agency of the great Revealer. Many people still would like to think that all divine agencies must be supernatural agencies, working by means that are miraculous or at least marvellous. But as we now well understand, God's divinest ways with men are often very homely and familiar ways, so natural and unobtrusive as scarcely to excite remark. And as a matter of fact, Jesus is a bringer of heavenly love into the lives of this generation by means so simply natural, that thousands of our young people, inexpressibly indebted to Him, are hardly conscious of any debt at all. The incalculable value of His contribution to their lives escapes their notice, because they fail to notice how far their moral heritage is of His creating.

The love of God may seem to us to be at best some-

thing very unsubstantial and far away—and so indeed it is, if it is to dawn on us only through visions or spiritual transports. But suppose it looked out on us first through our own mother's eyes, bending over us in infancy, and that we saw it in our father's face long before we knew how that tender and gracious affection was a reflection of the true glory of Jesus Christ, whose spirit lived in them triumphantly and made our father and mother what they were. Then followed a host of influences in our lives, all radiating from that same divine center of unselfish love—brothers and sisters, teachers, friends, associates, Christian leaders and pastors, great loving minds of the past also, that spoke to us through books—a thousand subtle and interweaving appeals to what is noblest in us, all springing from that living center of goodness, and all revealing our Father in heaven. The lines fall to us in pleasant places, we have a goodly heritage! Why? Surely not because we are so superlatively deserving, but because this Jesus so immediately and powerfully lived in our ancestors and still lives in the lives of His disciples all about us. Stupid we are, and blind and deaf, not to feel the incalculable riches of the love that has always been at work upon us—the imperishable energy of Jesus, mediated to us through the agency of those who live by Him.

A few days ago a wretched negro murderer was hurried away to the gallows. He was not fit to live, and he knew it. But he said in explanation, and said truly, that he had never had a chance. Kicked into the world and forsaken by cruel parents, kicked and beaten and abused through all his childhood, growing up among drunken criminals in ignorance of any better thing, despised and feared by society, his hand was against every man, and he

died as he had lived, undesired and unloved. Against that lurid background we can measure something of our indebtedness to Him who has caused our life to be actually rooted and grounded in Christian love—in the pervasive reality of a divinely helpful sympathy, reflected on us from infancy, from a hundred angles, because Jesus still reproduces His gentleness in the hearts of men. That is the way God most evidently makes Himself known to our generation, through the lives of men and women brought into spiritual contact with Him by the agency of an Elder Brother, the great friend of men. It is a great League of Love and Light, with our God at its head. And as a matter of fact and history and experience, men discover it and come into it under the leadership of this man of Nazareth, whose fervent friendship made him a Man of Sorrows. That is why he still has the name that is above every name, because he leads through love to life.

“Through love to light! O, wonderful the way
That leads from darkness to the perfect day!
From darkness and from sorrow of the night
To morning that comes singing o’er the sea.”

Let us not leave this phase of our subject without remembering once more how exquisite and supreme a service Jesus renders to human life when He attunes it to love as its major key. No conceivable degree of good fortune in material things is quite equal in value or permanence to this blessing. More and more as life goes on, one may apply to love the acid test and prove its unapproachable primacy among all human possessions.

Nothing makes this more clear than the clairvoyant reappraisal of life’s values that comes with severe illness. After certain days or weeks of invading pain and weak-

ness, one reaches—perhaps with a half-conscious sense of relief—a day when one no longer thinks of this world as his own. Its pursuits have slipped away from him, perhaps forever. Its boisterous appeals to his life-long interest, in business or politics or literature or reform, quite fail to reach his spirit in the strange border-land of detachment where he now lives, with only the nurse and the doctor and the weary struggle for rest as his chief concerns. But when he has come into these deep waters, where he finds no standing-ground at all, and where all his possessions have suddenly lost value and faded out into vague unreality, when he gropes confusedly for some reality on which his mind may rest with comfort, then love remains supreme, alone. Nothing can rob him of its power. His work may be finished, but by God's mercy he can still love—the noblest part of him still lives, faintly felt but invincible. His wife, his children, his friends, the neighbors who daily send in remembrances of their loving sympathy, and those, too, who have long since passed into that other world now so near—yes, and his Father in heaven also, who has loaded life with benefits—he is conscious that they love him and he loves them all, and that even the waters of death cannot drown that undying part of himself. And with even greater restfulness he knows that, as never before, their love now encompasses him: it watches by his bedside, it suffers with his suffering; his Father is with him in the dark and pain, and nothing can spoil that assurance, or quite loosen its hold upon him. He cannot think of the great doctrines, his spirit may be too dulled for prayer—but believing in Jesus he knows that love is there with him, that it will not leave him as the world slips away, and that it will even be waiting for him when he ventures

out solitary into the infinite unknown. The whole wide universe has nothing else that reaches or relieves him in his extremity—but underneath are the everlasting arms of love.

Is that not a rare imperishable essence that Jesus infuses into life? And would any man in his senses speak slightingly or patronizingly of Him who enriches life's relationships with this enduring fragrance? Yet if human consciousness bears unhesitating witness to any experience in life it is to this, that we love because He first loved us. He also that abideth in love abideth in God. This is the faith that Jesus brings to men and women of today.

CHAPTER III

THE LEADER IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

In that imperishable classic of the soul, the Shepherd Psalm, one of the great affirmations runs, "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." Imagination tends rather to catch on the opening sentences—on the idyllic pictures of the green pastures and the still waters, and even on the valley of the dark shadow, with the shepherd safely leading. But after all, we know that the very heart of the poem is in this central emphasis on the paths of righteousness. Here is the deep reasonable foundation that underlies the truth of all this high imagining. It is because God leads forever in ways of righteousness, that His children may sing confidently of pastures green and living waters. Other paths there are that lead into the desert and to death. But it is not our Father who leads His children there. His righteousness is like the great mountains. Justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne.

And so most naturally, when Jesus was seeking to make men understand what God was like, He filled this ancient psalm full of new meaning and reality. He gave it substance. He brought it within men's understanding, and gave it a deathless hold on their loyalty and affection. For when it spoke by faith alone of Jehovah as the Shepherd of His people, was not Jesus in visible reality the Good Shepherd? Did He not, before men's eyes,

Himself walk through the valley of the shadow, and there, seeing the wolf coming, give His life for the sheep? He made the colors of that old picture glow with the splendor of the tenderness of God. And most of all did He give color and reality to this central affirmation, He leadeth us in the paths of righteousness. He could do no less if God indeed were to shine through Him on the ignorance and unbelief of men.

To be sure, the world was deadly sick of righteousness in a way, and Jesus had need to present it in some new color, if he were to make men really hunger for it. The scribes and Pharisees were always before them, as the unco guid were always before the eyes of Robert Burns—and little help either of them brought to the poor wastrels of their time. But it makes one thank God and take courage that Jesus was so divine as to put God in a new light, so that very weak and shifty people came naturally to a steadfast purpose to do His will—actually grew into righteous people—because the whole outlook of their life was changed. No doubt it was love changed it, but it put iron into their character, who had been like reeds shaken by the wind. Jesus led them to God, and this was the inevitable result, that they began at once to grow like Him. They could not really live in touch with their Father and not think His thoughts and try to follow His ways. This is what Jesus did, and infallibly does, before our eyes today, for those who trust His leadership. He commits them to a life of righteousness.

It is something as normal and natural as any other process of life. We need to be clear on this point, for there have been centuries of almost impenetrable mystery and unreality surrounding it. The words and example of Jesus Himself leave us in no doubt of the central fact,

so simple and yet infinite in scope. He came to put men right with God, in the only possible way, by leading them to choose to do His will. When a woman out of the crowd called out in her enthusiasm, "Happy is the mother who bore you," with its suggestion of an inner circle of God's favored, Jesus answered, "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it." Again he said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Nothing was greater or wiser or better than just to do right in God's sight. And when someone told Him in the house, "Thy mother and thy brethren stand without desiring to speak with thee"; He answered, "Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

This is what Jesus was trying to bring about in the people whom He met from day to day—something very plain and simple, but very real and searching. They were to choose God's will just as children are loyally obedient to their father. A little girl in His audience could understand that, or a peasant, or household drudge. But for many centuries the Church has wrapped this central purpose of Jesus round with mystery and puzzling difficulty, so that its appealing simplicity has been much obscured.

How many of us can sympathize keenly with Harriet Beecher Stowe, when she was a little girl in the parsonage at Litchfield. With all her heart she longed to be right with God and to do His will as one of His children: but how she was to cross the line from being a child of wrath to being a daughter of the household, she could not see. Her father's doctrinal sermons were no more intelligible to her "than if they had been in Choctaw," and from

month to month she was held, miserable and afraid, outside the threshold, longing to enter in.

And then one day her father preached a communion sermon, without notes, straight from his true, warm heart, on Jesus as a friend offered to every human being. "Forgetting all his hair-splitting distinctions and dialectic subtleties, he spoke in direct, simple, and tender language of the great love of Christ." Harriet, then fourteen years old, listened with growing wonder and delight, her "whole soul illumined with joy." She chose to follow Jesus' call as naturally and eagerly as a sheep might follow its shepherd, and she went home that day in a new world of gladness and peace, to tell her father she had become a Christian. She had run in under his guard, so to speak, and was safe. And he, like a good father, was too wise to turn her back into the wilderness, though she had come into the fold in a strange way and with dangerous ease.

But when next year she went to Hartford, and made application to be received into the church there, the pastor—trusted friend of Dr. Beecher's—turned to the timid little girl, after her simple confession of faith and love, and said, "Harriet, do you feel that if the universe should be destroyed, you could be happy with God alone?" The awful picture was hardly to be realized on the instant, but she faltered, "Yes." The doctor continued, "You realize, I trust, in some measure at least, the deceitfulness of your heart, and that in punishment for your sins God might justly leave you to make yourself as miserable as you have made yourself sinful?" Again she whispered, "Yes," but the old torturing fears and perplexities had returned upon her: the path, then, could not be so simple

as it seemed: and it was years before she again fought her way through the wilderness into the pleasant light of the simple invitation of Jesus.

If we of today have swung over to the opposite extreme, it is most natural and wholesome and inevitable, after the doctrinal refinements of many centuries have so often obscured the primary intent of Jesus' message to mankind. He was trying to turn the hearts of the children to the Father, that they might do His will—there in Galilee—as it is done in heaven. And still this is the place He holds among men—with no lesser or more puzzling aim than this, that they should walk as forgiven children the ways of God. He confronts all men, everywhere, with this primary demand for righteous living, and He leads the way, so that they may be able to follow. The mystery of infinite love encircles it all around, but the human duty and privilege are in homely terms that all fathers and sons, all mothers and daughters, can understand.

Never was the world less able to dispense with such leadership as this. It needs to hear, clear as a trumpet call, the divine authoritative demand for righteousness. It is the supreme need of the hour, even though society has fallen out of humor with it, and prefers the witty, mocking voices of its own prophets. No one questions that the people of the nations are sick with longing for quietness, and peace, and far-stretching sunny vistas of security and good-will. Everywhere, beneath gaiety and misery alike, is a fierce unrest and discontent with the present order. Men seek for some new lubricant for the wheels of civilization. A League of Nations might answer, or a Peace Court at the Hague, or a non-competitive industrial system, or some sweeping social readjust-

ment. Something new must be found to check the disintegrating forces visibly at work on every side.

Yet what is needed is nothing new. It is something so prosaic, old-fashioned, and sternly uninviting as righteousness—so commonplace, so Puritanic, so Philistine in its uncouth associations! Can any reasonable man suggest an alternative? If he could, if some very clever person could find a better way, then Christainity would collapse speedily, as so many have been expecting it to do, for a thousand years and more. But until that new prophet has appeared, to introduce a social force more constructive than Jesus offers, we of this day must believe in Jesus just because He holds men so firmly and uncompromisingly to God's order—the order of His Father's kingdom. He summons men individually to yield their lives to God's direction. There is something splendid, something majestic, about the life He calls them to—a life rooted in the Eternal Goodness. But that is just the place that Jesus fills in the world of today, the place of one who undoubtedly does lead men to this high fellowship with the Unseen—a fellowship in righteousness.

What is the infallible note of an honest association with Jesus, such as might warrant one in being called Christian? An acute student of the races of the Near East has recently said that "in the Levant the typical Christian is an accomplished liar, and abject coward, and a noxious parasite, pimp, and pander." Even if we discount this fifty per cent, for possible prejudice or exaggeration, the statement still concurs with history's estimate of Byzantine Christianity for a millennium.

That is the type of Christianity that "failed to prevent" the late war. A "Christian Europe," on such formal and quite illusory lines as these, is the one that threatens in a

few years to take up war again, for frankly selfish purposes. Whatever "Christian" may mean in such connections as this, it evidently does not mean the actual religion of Jesus, or anything resembling it.

What is it that the spirit of Jesus still demands of men today, and what does He make of men and women who actually follow Him?

There is no doubt that the average man's idea of religion that makes one acceptable to God is a strange, impossible compound. It has to do with baptism, and the Church, and believing many things one does not understand, with setting up to be more pious than other men, with Bible reading and saying prayers and attending meetings. On the other hand, Donald Hankey has left us an unforgettable picture of the average man's religion or ideal, as it came to the front in the field life of the British army. We cannot do better than study it a moment, familiar as it is, to see how it compares, not with conventional church religion but with what Jesus demands and measurably secures from those who follow Him.

The average man—so Hankey says—may be immoral or irreligious, but there are certain moral qualities he admires and others that he despises. He *admires* courage, generosity, practical kindness, honesty, persistence in trying to do the right thing. He *despises* meanness, physical fear, moral cowardice, instability, equivocation, narrow-mindedness, subservience to rank or power or wealth. He *hates* "swank," cant, cruelty. Singularly enough, as Hankey reminds us, this picture so far as it goes is like the ideal of the gospel—it fits in with what Jesus taught. It would be easy to point out, item by item, how Jesus nobly presented the very qualities the enlisted man admires, how He fought with the things despised, and how

completely He loathed the cruel pride and insincerity that honest men detest.

And yet the average man scarcely associates this moral ideal of his—this working religion—either with Jesus or with his Church. It shows how dreadfully out of joint present religious conditions are, that the very type of character Jesus came to bring should not even be associated with him in the popular mind, but that, instead, the message of Jesus should be identified with a puzzling mass of ecclesiastical teachings that the average man turns away from as impossible or unreal.

This is certainly not altogether the fault of the Church. It has struggled with its task heroically, but it has been clogged by a heavy burden of tradition relentlessly imposed upon it for centuries, and it has often failed to put first things first. Many of the unrealities the average man objects to become as real and natural as living itself, when one has made the acquaintance with Jesus and has come humbly back to God. Moreover, the ordinary man in the street has an insincerity and a cant of his own, when he talks about the kind of religion that appeals to him. As Hankey points out, he is often abominably selfish in his pleasures, and his actual living is stained with the moral cowardice he affects to despise. There is a good deal of camouflage about his profession of ideals.

But with Jesus there is no cant or camouflage whatever. He stands for the average man's ideal of righteousness, quite without reservation. Not as something to be put on as a garment, but as the natural living out of an inward spirit—the doing right because one is right. And He asks a good deal more than does the ordinary man—as we should expect. Even we feel that we need a more exacting guide and leader in matters of righteousness than

the man from the trenches. The voice of the people, as a matter of history, is not apt to be quite like the voice of God, nor are the thoughts of the crowd like God's thoughts in the concerns of the soul. And Jesus leaves the crowd utterly behind in the requirements he lays on men—he outruns all our feeble ideas of unselfish helpfulness. He teaches that a man should not try to crowd to the front of the procession. "If any man would be first," He said, "he shall be last of all and minister of all." He took on Himself the servile office of washing their feet, saying, "If I, then, the Lord and the Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet." He firmly demanded self-mastery for the purpose of love, purity in deed and thought, and faithfulness in duty—where popular thought only hesitatingly follows Him. And before and above all He sets His two great commandments, that we should love God with all our heart, and our neighbor as we love ourselves. We have to admit that this is not average religion anywhere, and that society must always stand in need of a strong Leader and Helper if it is to come to righteousness such as this.

We have to admit regretfully, also, that the Church has not always kept this phase of Jesus' teaching to the fore. Jesus Himself unquestionably placed it in the very fore front, as primary and indispensable for all who would follow Him. But the early Church had its attention quickly diverted from what Jesus said, to what the Church authorities demanded. It is a genuine comfort to remember this, for only so is it possible to understand or explain why the living gospel of God so sorrowfully languished for centuries in the great needy world. For a thousand years the common people did not have in their hands the gospel records with Jesus' words placing the doing of

God's will above all else, but they did have ever in their ears, emphasized by the relentless determination of the Church to crush all dissent, this paralyzing summons, still repeated in the ears of millions:—

“Whoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith. Which Faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.” Does this even faintly remind us of the message and spirit of Jesus? Can we imagine Him adding, after a bewildering series of metaphysical subtleties regarding three “uncreated and incomprehensible” Persons in the Godhead, “He therefore that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity”? Nor can we conceive of Him who was the Friend of Sinners going on to say to His disciples, “It is necessary to everlasting salvation that you also believe rightly in the Incarnation.” He did ask without ceasing, as John so often reminds us, that men should believe that God had sent Him, so that they should receive His message as truth and recognize His mission as divine. But He asked men to think not on the mystery of His eternal relation to the Godhead, but on their own relation to their brother—whether he had aught against them—and to their Father in Heaven, whether they were doing His will in love.

Who can measure the loss and pity of it, that half of intellectual Europe thinks of the place of Jesus in the life of today as they think of His Church—despotic, autocratic, suffocating thought, forbidding inquiry, insistent above all on submissive conformity to the inherited dogmas of the Great Councils of antiquity? Or that the world of labor should think of Jesus' influence as the “chloroforming agency” of the bourgeoisie? Is it strange that the thinking world has so swung away from Him who

came to lead men home to God, when His demands have been so piteously misrepresented to them for fifteen hundred years? The wonder of wonders is that through all these centuries the true Church of those who simply heard His words and did them has kept on its way unbroken, believing in Him with joy and thankfulness, and following after Him till death. And today, in the face of all retrogression and apparent decadence of faith, there is such an open and waiting field for the preaching of the real Jesus, the Saviour of men, as there has never been before since the Near East first listened to the message.

The Jesus of today, like the Jesus of Galilee, is a leader in righteousness rather than a leader in correct opinions: and just in proportion as men give attention to Him, and trust that He was sent of God, and so yield themselves to His Mastership, will they find themselves walking in paths both of truth and goodness, such as lead men by green pastures and still waters.

But quite apart from inherited beliefs and enthusiasms, is it a fact that Jesus really does lead men in these difficult ways of righteousness today? Anyone can see the grave relaxation of moral restraint in our generation—the impatience of control, the feverish demand for amusement and ever more amusement, the all-prevailing appeal to sex, and the steady degeneration of the dance and the movies and popular literature in obvious response to this appeal. The tide of relaxation and self-indulgence runs dangerously swift for the young men and women who have to build their house of life in these days disordered by the world-wide passions unleashed by war. Is Jesus actually more than a fading name, a hollowed memory from which the virtue has gone out? Now that there is so much selfishness and uncertainty and doubt abroad, does He

still bind men's hearts in steadfast allegiance to truth and purity and love—in leal loyalty to God. And if He does it, how does He do it? Assuredly one has need to reflect deeply before he essays to answer such an appeal with confidence. And yet, when all has been said about the sinister forces of the world today, the experience of life takes clear form and gives decisive answer in some such wise as follows.

In the distributing station of a great power plant there is no visible sign or assurance of the presence of tremendous forces. An ignorant man might refuse to believe that any great powers were gathered there for service. And yet behind each silent shining lever lie forces as swift and powerful as lightning, ready to leap out in action serving the necessities of millions. And here also, in spite of its lowly origin, is this divine immeasurable energy, flowing from Jesus Christ through society today in streams of power, building up men in righteousness—individual, social, civic, international—limitless in power as they believe in Him, bringing moral leadership to humanity in ways as diverse as the infinite variety of human need.

It springs first and most obviously from His character—His life—His example. We have in the New Testament the brief, artless story of His life. Any man of note in our day would have a fuller biography than this. And yet as we read it attentively we feel its extraordinary quality. All idea of its being an invention, like the biography of a character in fiction, drops away from us at once and of necessity. By every instinct of the soul we recognize it, with whatever reservation we may make as to details we do not understand, as the true story of a true man. If there is such a thing in human life as beauty, or dignity, or majesty, we find it here. It lays hold on the

very springs of our being, probing our inmost thoughts, charming us, inspiring, inviting, filling us with strange desires, breeding hunger for better things. All that is noble and aspiring in us revives under its strange incitement and rouses itself to make response.

Sometimes we may wonder, doubtfully, whether we really do make such response, or whether our apparent feeling is only in mechanical conformity to the conventions of training and tradition. Thank God, we need not suspect the genuineness of our spiritual reactions to such a story. It draws us irresistibly, because in us is something—much baffled and crowded down—that recognizes in Him our true estate, the very type of man that we would be. If He were here now, being such as He was, He would draw us infallibly, as has no man we have ever met, in admiration and friendship and imitation. All of us have known men whom we have made our heroes, so noble they seemed to us, so great in helpfulness, so winsome and enviable in character. And here is one whose goodness might fairly bring us to our knees in reverence—a man so strong, so fearless, so gentle; so clean and true and honorable in the midst of all life's shuffling and deceit; so full of sympathy and help for people whom others push aside or tread upon; so radiating trust in God, and hope unquenchable. If we had the faintest chance to get near such a man in the society of today we would seek his company and commit ourselves and our ambitions to his influence with eager gladness. A little of his friendship and personal attachment would make this often sordid world a different place to us. His very awareness of God in the midst of this blind ruck of things would of itself alone draw us to him with all our hearts,

in a hope of like victory over the down-drag of material circumstances. Just to see him, as a beloved physician, bending over the sick in body and bruised in heart, making rest and ease and hope bloom again in faces worn with pain, would pull mightily at our hearts; and to know that he was able, too, to bring peace of soul to the vicious and despairing—would we not follow after such a man today, if good fortune made it possible for us to be at his side!

And one thing more! We do not judge of the wonder of Jesus' life, as His first friends did, only by what they saw in Him. We have seen His character reproduced in other lives swayed by His spirit, so that we can judge how His temper works out under innumerable diverse conditions, often unfavorable—and especially in this wise, modern world that we call our own. There is no doubt that such lives vehemently attract us. We may feel regrettable limitations in some of them from their training or mental environment, but so far as they have lived and served in the faith and friendship of Jesus, they have had a truly heavenly beauty, and they stir our souls with longing, like rare music or a memorable sunset.

One can see this principle working every day in non-Christian lands, where the example of Jesus—however imperfectly reproduced—is thrown up against a background of national religions that lack redeeming power. Men who love their country see hope for her in this moral power that springs from Him. Mr. Wen Shih Ken, recent Secretary of State for Chekiang Provinces, gives typical expression to this experience. Mr. Wen was received not long ago into the Presbyterian Church, and gave this brief statement of the explanation of his action.

"My first impulse towards Christianity was received when I was a student in Tientsin. The students of the Medical College of the city were notorious for their immorality. Every effort was made to bring about their reform but without success. Finally President Liu of the Medical College induced some of the students to join a Bible class in the Tientsin Union Church. At first there was no perceptible change, but presently surprising results came out. Most of the men in the class were baptised. They became diligent in study, patient in healing, and energetic in preaching the gospel in other schools. The evidence furnished in the lives of these students convinced me that God had real power to make young men repent and to purify their hearts. . . .

"I have decided to become a Christian because I wish to be like Christian men whom I have observed—a man with a pure, strong heart, strong blood, true patriotism, and perfect zeal. I believe that Christianity is able to save China. I believe the Bible is the weapon with which she can work out her salvation and face the civilized world."

No doubt power flows from the life and example of Jesus—undying power so long as men are men; even from that brief sketch preserved in the gospels, with the appended two thousand years of living commentary and illustration.

The same creative energy for righteousness flows from His teaching—increasingly, as the disappointing centuries emphasize its unapproached supremacy. All the steadily mounting knowledge and wisdom since His time have not brought us more vital, searching words of social and spiritual guidance than He once spoke to an out-of-door crowd of peasants on a hill-side in Galilee. We have to stop and think—and think hard—to realize how fruitful His teaching as to human relations has become in this last

century, when men have begun to look intently at His words rather than at the authorized theological system of the Church. Most men today are ashamed not to seem at least familiar with His idea that honor and greatness lie rather in serving than in being served—although even so late as in the eighteenth century we find His Church looking for the most part in another direction. His repeated calls to brotherliness, and mercy, and forgiveness, because of our common kinship with God as our Father, echo in the ears of all humanity today, as though they belonged to all branches of the human family by right of birth: and yet their growing power, already immeasurable, flows straight from Him who talked of these strange obligations, even to narrow fanatic Jews, who were notable haters even in that harsh Roman world.

We remember, too, the calm assurance with which He spoke of all that realm of reality beyond what our physical senses grasp—of the over-shadowing presence of God, of His goodness, and His fatherly care in the midst of a world of cruel forces and yet more cruel men. What astounding revelation He brought, also, of the possibility of moral recovery and restoration for those broken by spiritual failure and defeat. Men never guessed that the way back to God could lie so broad and open, so inviting with the promise of joy again, and even love, for such as had abused love and poisoned the springs of joy. And always He spoke as one who belonged to two worlds—to this one, to which he was subject by ties of flesh and blood, as are we all: but also to the world of the eternal life, already begun here amid earthly days and nights, but reaching on timelessly to horizons only known to God.

There is no other teaching like it in all the world—no

other influence like its influence. How can it be that He retains this primacy in leadership, when our generation, standing as it were upon the shoulders of all that have gone before, should be able to produce seers and prophets such as the weary rank and file of humanity have never known before? All sorts of cults and theosophies claim our attention, and some of them have much of truth and inspiration. Yet when we come to view them closely they are at best but reminders, in some respect, of Him who spake as never man spake. The world simply does not take them seriously when they claim primary authority. But the sayings of Jesus radiate the unique majesty of authority that belongs only to revelation—not to cleverness like George Bernard Shaw's, nor to the crude dogmas of Mrs. Eddy, nor the transcendental musings of a philosopher like Emerson, but to him who alone could say without bathos, "I am the truth." When he says, e. g., to the nations of today, "Be ye therefore merciful as your Father is merciful," He speaks with profundity, and authority as well, that leave men silent, as if listening to the voice of God.

And so, amid the endless uncertainties through which we have to guide our way, we count this as certainty, that Jesus and righteousness are inseparably linked. His place in modern life is such that He and social righteousness are simply not to be considered apart. If we are thoughtful men we cannot ignore Karl Marx. How much less can we ignore—as some affect to do—Him whose life and teaching are like a living flame in their power to rebuke evil and refine the good. Whether in the solemn loneliness of the individual spirit, or the complicated relationships of classes and nations, He is a leader in righteousness—in all the paths that lead through human weakness to the will of God.

CHAPTER IV

AS ARBITER OF DEBATED THINGS

There are certain matters of grave import, that men endlessly debate. Not such perennial themes as the high cost of living or the way of a man with a maid, that one may discuss in sheer vacuity of mind. But certain high matters of universal and perpetual concern, to which the human spirit turns in moments of clearest vision and deepest self-consciousness. The American Indians used to debate these problems around their camp-fires in northern forests, just as men do today in discussion groups in the universities or under desert stars in Africa.

They are matters not simply of speculative interest—though men have always loved to speculate about them. They are intensely practical—at least as much so as any other phase of the stormy struggle for existence. Whether my life tends up or down, whether it runs into success or failure, depends largely on the answer that I find for them. One man loses heart and commits suicide, another becomes as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land for thousands, according to his conclusions on these themes. We may be quite unconcerned about them for years—and then suddenly, at a turn in the road, we are met with an insatiable hunger of the soul for light and understanding. We may think ourselves quite superior to what we consider an old-fashioned concern over theological questions, but we do not really know what is in our

hearts until they are shaken by trouble as leaves are shaken by the wind. Then we discover new longings and new needs. A house built on the sands stands up as squarely in fair or foggy weather, and makes as brave a show to the world, as one built on rock: but when the clean hurricane sweeps in from the ocean, and the milk-white waves break through and flood the land, then is the testing time when one thinks about foundations. And it is these foundation realities of human life that men endlessly debate, and to which no thoughtful man long holds himself superior.

Jesus frankly stated that He came to throw light on these problems, whose beginning and end reach into the unseen. He said, "I am come a light into the world." He said again, with the tense earnestness of one standing on the very edge of death, "To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." Probably He is the only man who ever ventured to say, "I know whence I came and whither I go." So great a sage as Confucius deliberately refused even to speak on these questions. He would not pretend to give assurance where he felt he did not know. "Not knowing life," he said, "how can we know death?" He told men not to seek to inquire whether there were gods or spirits. Jesus said, "Ye have not known God, but I know Him." He made vast pretensions as to His wisdom in the fundamental concerns of the soul. The philosophers and theologians of His time he called "blind leaders of the blind," but of Himself He said, that the man who trusted His word and acted on it built his life on rock. These are staggering assumptions for a man who never had as much school education as we who read this book. What are we to make of them? As practical,

open-minded men of the twentieth century, what place are we to give to Jesus as an authority in these problems as apprehended in the present day?

Of course there are various attitudes that may be taken regarding Him. His first friends, who had known Him longest, said that He was crazy. This is what His own family thought, so bewildered were they by His assumption of authority. His neighbors, who had seen Him coming and going on the streets for years, said, "He is merely one of us villagers, what is the use of paying Him any attention? He is only a carpenter. We all know His sisters here in town, and as for James and Joseph and Simon and Judas, His brothers, they are no better than we. Whence hath He this wisdom?" They were clearly jealous of Him and His popularity. Others, among whom were the leading citizens and the Church leaders, who should have known, said, "The devil is in Him."

As for the public opinion of today, the only utterly foolish and indefensible attitude is to ignore Him, as so many do, as though His teachings were negligible for men so modern as ourselves. He is disregarded by many as completely as though He taught that the earth is flat. Some typical writers discuss these topics, which He lived and died to make luminous to men, as if Jesus had never lived on earth or spoken unforgettable words of wisdom. Some of our popular novelists make great show of analyzing human life in its realistic completeness, trailing hero or heroine through a labyrinth of moral and spiritual perplexities, and yet apparently never having heard of that master of men whom none can wholly forget and whose words still fall on life like sunlight on a wintry day. And other writers and teachers come to conclusions diametrically opposed to those of Jesus, without a trace of

hesitation or misgiving, as though His teachings were like a text-book out of date, worthless save as a curiosity.

If Jesus had taken a doctor's degree at Jena, if He had studied at the Sorbonne, and if He had the cordial commendation of the psychologists and philosophers of our leading American universities, we should be compelled to listen to what He has to say. But as it is, we are forced to recognize not only that He lived in times pre-medieval, but that he was not even one of the intelligentsia of His day—just a workingman in a country village. What place has He as arbiter among learned men in this scientific age?

II

He has the place of an unapproached specialist in the things of the spirit. Even though He were despised and forsaken of all men, we could not attentively face Him without perceiving the Master. We can discuss Him glibly enough when He is out of sight, but when we thoughtfully consider Him as He is presented in the gospels, letting mind and heart weigh well His words and deeds, we feel—as such a critic as Pierre Loti said—that He is “inexplicable and unique.” There is no man like Him in spiritual quality. Even the callous police-runners of His day sensed the fact that never man spoke as He did; but it was because never man saw the divine realities of human life as He saw them. He looked into the face of God as an eagle gazes on the sun. The eye of His soul was undulled with sin—stainless He was, where to be stained is to be troubled in vision, as we are troubled. You and I could never read both human heart and divine thought so unerringly

as to say to an outcast with confident authority, Thy sins be forgiven thee. But it excites no wonder to see Jesus assuming as a matter of course this prerogative of a flawless spiritual insight and authority.

He did not hesitate to claim for Himself the place of a specialist, such as no university of today could secure for its department of ethics even had it the wealth of Rockefeller. We can hardly exaggerate the amazing quality of His pretensions as a moral teacher, or the angry disgust they created in His time, so extravagant and ridiculous did they appear. If an untaught young man from Oklahoma were to come East today, announcing that the men in our leading schools and pulpits were blind leaders of the blind, and that the truth as to the religious duties of mankind was with him, we should hardly do him the honor of being indignant. We should pass him by as a brash young man. But Jesus set Himself unhesitatingly above the most venerated authorities both of the past and of His own time. "Ye have heard that it hath been said . . . but I say unto you . . ."—the audacity of those familiar words is the sublime audacity of one conscious of being the supreme specialist in concerns of the soul. "One greater than Solomon is here," He told them—one even "greater than the temple," if Jews could conceive of such a thing. "Many prophets and kings have desired to hear the things that ye hear, and have not heard them"—so He said once to His disciples.

There is nothing ridiculous to us in these assumptions—nothing subtly humorous, when seen from our modern scientific angle. Abraham Lincoln, in the severest stress to which a human spirit groping for wisdom could be put, found them superlatively reasonable. We approve

them. They are justified by the moral power and glory of the speaker. Nothing less could make them other than grotesquely impertinent. He Himself based them on the fact that He spoke for God. He did not refer His hearers to books or other authorities for His statements. He said, "As the Father taught me, I speak these things," Either that is bosh, or else it is of awesome and momentous consequence. And not only did He claim the authority of the specialist. He spoke with a strange clairvoyant insight into the realities of the spirit, its fundamental needs and capacities, that silences our shallower contentions. It imperiously demands assent. And something in us answers, and approves. We may feel unable or unwilling to obey, but we reverently recognize a higher wisdom than our own. We may even be in a critical and argumentative mood; yet when Jesus says, "This is my commandment that ye love one another, as I have loved you," we have little disposition to argue. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." "God is not the God of the dead but of the living." Words like these leave us in no mood for measuring ourselves with Him. Something in us surges up in approval, as though our spirits were made to respond to truths like these—truths more searching and imperious than those to which we are accustomed in books.

From all over the world today, from soldiers, and statesmen, and leaders in finance and industry, one could gather fervent approval of the teachings of Jesus, as furnishing the key to progress in this new century. As in

that recent "last word to the people of Great Britain" from Earl Grey:—

"It's Christ's way. Mazzini saw it. We've got to give up quarrelling. We've got to come together. We've got to realize that we are all members of the same family. There's nothing that can help humanity, I'm perfectly sure there isn't—perfectly sure—except love. Love is the way out, and the way up. That's my farewell to the world."

It is a striking fact that the modern statesmen of the English-speaking world, the men of affairs who are actually carrying the world burdens as freely chosen representatives of the people, fall back upon the authority of Jesus as the supreme arbiter and guide for our troubled civilization. Witness that recent appeal to the "Citizens of the British Empire," issued by the premiers of the British Commonwealth of Nations, in which they say:—

"The spirit of good-will among men rests on spiritual forces: the hope of a 'brotherhood of humanity' reposes on the deeper spiritual fact of the 'Fatherhood of God.' In the recognition of the fact of that Fatherhood and of the divine purpose for the world, which are central to the message of Christianity, we shall discover the ultimate foundation for the reconstruction of an ordered and harmonious life for men. . . . The eternal validity and truth of these spiritual forces are in fact the one hope for a permanent foundation for world peace." (Signed by Lloyd George, Louis Botha, and the premiers of the other leading colonies.)

Our own leading statesmen for fifty years past would say the same.

We need not then apologize for giving to Jesus of

Nazareth as attentive a hearing as to the latest magazine writer of our day. If any portion of current literature makes us feel that He has quite dropped out of consideration among practical men of this century, so much the worse for current literature. So great a specialist was He in the things of God that His appeal to men is universal and timeless. Soviet Russia may utterly repudiate Him, but Soviet Russia is to Jesus Christ as a single crashing breaker on the shore is to the vast silent tidal wave swinging endlessly across the oceans.

III

What is it we most need to know, that we may live our life today and tomorrow ardently, faithfully, undiscouraged by rebuffs and failures? What but the truth about God and his relation to us! If that should link up our brief career with His glory, making each unfulfilled capacity and hunger a prophecy of what shall be when His plan for our lives is complete, then even earthly life means God and we together, working to an end He knows and desires. Such truth would make life great indeed. All social efficiency lies behind it. But who can assure us of such truth? Not the reviewers, or essayists, or even the novelists of today! Jesus alone says He can. He said of God, "I know him"—said that His knowledge was direct, personal, unparalleled on earth. "No one knoweth the Father save the Son." "The world knew thee not, but I knew thee." In this magnificent confidence He won for Himself, first of all, the greatest moral victory over life that the history of our race has known. It made Him socially efficient—a physician, a minister, a saviour, without a parallel. This

huge assertion of His self-consciousness did not wreck Him—as it should have done if it were false—it made Him the man of all men; it gave Him the name that is above every name. It accredits Him to each succeeding age as the supreme teacher about God in humanity. So we listen with moral intentness to what Jesus has to say. None other can do for us what He can do, by bringing Father and child together here and now. He knew how. He knows how. If we would but attend to him, and believe in Him!

Again, our world needs inexpressibly to know what this God of Jesus thinks of us. Is it likely that He who made the universe thinks of us at all? If so, what does He think of us, in the few poor years we have before we drop out of sight as a leaf drops in the forest? Is it possible He cares for our infinitesimal concerns? Jesus, so to speak, staked His life on the fact that He cares. When we read an essay by the genial John Burroughs, asserting that God does not care, and that in any case we know nothing of Him, then whose authority shall we accept, that of John Burroughs or of Jesus? Which is the greater specialist in spiritual things? The one who belongs to our time, or He who belongs to all times? The world will soon forget the denials of the naturalist, but when do you suppose men in trouble will forget the assurance, "Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father. Be of good cheer, ye are of more value than many sparrows." Humanity prefers the convictions of Jesus to the doubts of the sceptic, not because Jesus' teaching is the more comfortable, but because in the long run the doubts make for the destruction of society, as in Bolshevism, while the faith of Jesus makes for the uninterrupted integration of society along

the path of maximum development. Just to be assured—as Jesus assures us—that the very first demand God makes on men is for their intelligent love, is to be lifted up into a new world of hopes and possibilities and obligations.

Again, our age longs to know whether God hears us—can we speak with Him? In the still loneliness of the night may one take counsel with a better Friend than any we know on earth? Is it possible that here among the seductions of earth we may actually have this bracing fellowship with One infinitely better than ourselves. Prominent scholars today may tell us No. The question is at best much debated. But Jesus says to the man or woman of today, “Ask and ye shall receive.” “Pray to thy Father, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee.” Suppose He had said, as some say today, “Ask not in prayer, as the heathen do: for your Father knoweth what ye have need of before ye ask Him.” Instead, He vindicated God’s right to be as freely kind as the average man, by saying, “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?” What a world this would be if men trusted the judgment of Jesus at this point! If they accepted fearlessly and loyally His confidence that God is as helpful as a human father—and far more so.

Jesus does not hesitate to assume the reality of God’s duties to men. A leading preacher, who belongs in thought to an earlier generation, advertised himself the other day as preaching on the blasphemy of just this assertion. Yet how could Jesus set forth God as Father, and leave Him without duties to His sons and

daughters except by special covenant? There is hardly a more beautiful and touching sight in our world, than that of a mother holding her baby in her arms. The little face, still smooth in serene unconsciousness of care, gazes up into its mother's face with unwinking stare, perfectly safe, perfectly content, knowing nothing of the thousand dangers that would beset it were those arms to fail, only trusting that the face on which his eyes are fixed is his own happy universe of security and promise. In all our world there is no other trust so perfect or so common. Jesus shared it when He lay on His own mother's breast. And wholly knowing this sacrament of parental love, He used it to make luminous His gospel. He called on men everywhere so to think of God, and so to treat Him every day, as the One who had made them for Himself. Evidently, if one believes in Jesus, the sky never can be altogether gray, life never utterly forlorn—although here, as everywhere, it is the great faith that reaps the great reward.

It is of the future that men debate most eagerly, as to what lies behind death's inexorable curtain. Does it hide blank nothing, or a new self-realization pulsing with life and promise? At times it has been the mode to dismiss the question with a blasé indifferentism, as if mankind had grown superior to hopes bound up with its intellectual childhood, and were ashamed to confess to so primitive an emotion. We have passed through such a time within the memory of us all. But whatever the psychologists and essayists have been saying in their class-rooms and reviews, the common folk in life's trenches, the wives and husbands and fathers and mothers, the old and lonely and sick and disappointed, the unnoticed millions of those who carry on grimly in

silence, still share the unquenchable life hunger—still cling to the vanished love of those who seem to have left them forever. Should any doubt it, let him enter a leading bookstore and see the tables loaded with “psychic” literature bringing a babel of messages from that unknown beyond—by ouija board, by automatic writing, by mediums and spirits of every description, telling in detail of conditions in the life to come.

Here again we have to stop resolutely and ask ourselves what place is to be reserved for Jesus, as an authority amid this jostling throng of clairvoyant seers? He is manifestly out of vogue, and quite left behind by the eager crowd who find Him without pungency or flavor in comparison with disembodied spirits who will discourse every evening, if duly persuaded, on the most minute details of existence on the spiritual plane. But when the fad has burnt out, and the crowd has passed on to something else, what then will Jesus have to say to us and our children?

He will still bring the unhesitating assurance of eternal life. His argument for it is not in any logical demonstration, but simply in His own self-consciousness and His calm insight into the realities of the spirit. He imparts to men His own convictions, by sheer force of His own personality. We come into His company and under His influence, and presently find ourselves sharing His faith and assured of a life indestructible by death. If we come under the influence of certain men of our time—Theodore Dreiser, say, and his school of fierce contenders for an art that knows neither morality nor restraint—faith in a continuing fellowship with God becomes almost instantly not incredible only, but puerile and ridiculous. In the same way, moral and intellectual

sympathy with Jesus speedily opens our eyes to something of what was so real to Him. And with that insight we are content: we do not even feel the need of argument; we are satisfied, as with knowledge at first hand.

What Jesus did for men in His day who knew Him was to show how unthinkable was fellowship with God in terms of this life only. It was a fellowship of love, which reached out every day into the eternal. He said to those first enthusiastic friends in Galilee, who were jeered at and maltreated for His sake, "Happy are you, for great is your reward in heaven." They were to look up and on. When He had been preaching to the poor and healing the sick through a hot summer day in the villages, He slipped out in the cool of the night to talk with God, thus holding fast to His brethren and to His Heavenly Father, as with either hand. When His eyes were just closing to the last dread sights of Calvary He said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." All along the way, from the first days to the last, He lived and spoke as one related to two worlds. He was bound up in the same bundle of life as the eternal God. And any man who closely attends to Jesus Christ today, inevitably comes to share this consciousness and conviction. We find in Him a supreme authority as to the mysterious hinterland of earthly life. We rest in His assurance that there is a home of the soul with wider and more glorious horizons than these hills and prairies and oceans that shut us in. Love is stronger than death and God's love does not exhaust itself upon us here.

But if we pay first heed to the voluble spirits, whom Sir Conan Doyle so vehemently commends to our attention, the whole scene changes. The majesty of the glory of God—that filled the anticipation of Jesus—

fades out miserably into an existence wholly bounded by human imagination. No longer does the ineffable wonder of God's love and righteousness fill the hearts of the children who have found their Father's house. No longer is the clear vision of Jesus Christ the joy of men and women He has redeemed. All expectation of being like Him, when we see Him as He is, drops unhonored out of sight. The central fact of that existence is no longer a divine enlargement that "hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive."

Instead we have an ever-changing composite of the views, often most attractive and uplifting, of men and women like ourselves—Unitarians, Christian Scientists, exponents of New Thought, spiritualists, conventionally orthodox, of every shade of religious training and insight. It is a bewildering labyrinth of conflicting counsels, always haunted by the admitted presence of "lewd spirits of the baser sort," seeking to break in by unworthy channels and confuse the truth. If once we part company with the serene confidence of the Great Master, and refuse to rest in his calm anticipation of God's love for ourselves and those we love, then suddenly we fare forth into a region of mocking plausibilities, where faith at any moment may break down and leave us in a twilight bleak and chill.

Here we recognize the fitness of Jesus as a leader for today. He made no effort to describe what transcends our limited human understanding. A business man has no language in which to make his little boy of three understand the complexities of financial credit and exchange. The little lad is in his father's world and has the same brain and potential mental capacity. And yet just for lack of a few years of development he cannot faintly compre-

hend his father's world. There is no language in which it may be made plain to him. How infinitely wider is the chasm between our physical conditions here on earth and the realm of spirit that transcends all earthly experience and imagination! Jesus said in simple words that His followers should enter into the joy of their Lord; that they should be with Him and behold His glory. He said also that they should still carry weighty responsibilities in the service of His Kingdom.

And so we may be content for those we love who "have the misfortune to die." They are in the hands of a tenderer care than ours, and there we may leave them, without nagging pursuit or cross-examination by mediums or ouija-boards, in the strange peace of God. Jesus steadies men today by a transcendent hope, built up on love, instead of leaving them to "a puzzled fumbling with distracting mysteries."

"People don't believe that way now"—so we are told confidently in answer to any argument like the above. "Jesus is impossible as arbiter in these matters because He is quite out of touch with the trend of modern thought." There is much truth in this last contention. He is out of touch with current thinking. But so He was long ago. So He has always been. The explanation of it lies all too plainly on the surface. As He said to Peter when Peter differed sharply with Him, "You mind not the things of God but the things of men." The crushing humiliation of his Master by evil men was unthinkable to Jesus' friends. It was not unthinkable to redeeming love, nor to those in sympathy with God, but self-interest and worldly wisdom could make nothing of it. And here is the infinite worth of Jesus to society in our time. He does not represent "current thought." With

an insight divinely clear He "minds the things of God." The stream of eager, excited talk flows on—he stands unmoved as the revealer of our Father's will, holy and right and good. So we lean on Him as arbiter. We take refuge in His insight, fearing our own self-will and ignorance.

Jesus then has this place in the life of today, as of a light shining in a dark place. We may talk as much as we please about the "decadence of the church" and the "new orthodoxy," but it is truer today than ever it was that millions would die for Him, intelligently and without hesitation, through sheer devotion. Whether among the Brahmans of New England, or in the African Congo, in dazed, unshepherded Russia, or in China or Armenia where we have watched so many noble spirits die, among all classes and cultures, Roman and Greek and Protestant, men and women are at the core of their hearts loyal to this Jesus who opens to them a way to God. They rest upon His revelation of the Father—they trust His insight into eternal truth—they believe in Him.

Dr. J. H. Hutton of Glasgow has given in one of his essays a most arresting definition of what it is to be a Christian. "A Christian," he says, "is one who proposes, God helping him, to go on to embody in his entire system of life the insight into things which Jesus Himself lived by." That is what it means to believe in Him. To take Him as arbiter! To live by His insight. To come gradually, as His friend said, to "have the mind of Christ" in all problems personal and social.

CHAPTER V

THE BRINGER OF THE KINGDOM

We have spoken of Jesus as the bringer of love into the social life of today. Imagine infinite love brought into close contact with the cold selfishness of such a world as ours! This much is certain, it would be found struggling mightily with hostile forces. It would find itself confronted with a staggering task, as wide as the world. We cannot conceive it as quiescent in the face of horrid wrong and cruelty. It could not be simply for the comfort and uplift of the few fortunate souls who might be willing to receive it. Divine love, suddenly made operative in Armenia, would be as stern as death, and tender as a mother. Wherever in our world it might present itself, it would be challenged to mortal combat: always it would face the need of heroic self-assertion and intense activity.

A life like that of Jesus in the midst of humanity like ours must always mark the center of a world conflict. It stirs up trouble. He came to bring not peace but a sword. Love as a sentiment may be placidly airy and unsubstantial, and Christian people may talk much about it on their personal way to heaven. But the true love of God on earth, honest and open-eyed, is an aggressive energy, always involved of necessity in the greatest of all good fights—the fight for the Kingdom of God.

And that is the place of Jesus in the life of today—

He is the heart and soul of the cooperative struggle to make God's love rule on earth. The reign of His Father's good will in the lives of men He called the Kingdom of Heaven. He thought of it as realized here on earth, and equally as reaching on into the world to come. And that men might have it as a master ambition in the very forefront of their living and thinking, He left them this prayer for a constant spur and reminder:

"Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Manifestly it is a fighting prayer, for all true hearts and gallant souls who, even at the cost of ease, would fain leave the world a better place than they found it. And the power and the glory of it as a prayer are in the fact that it links up our fitful impulses of benevolence with the steadfast love of God, triumphing and undismayed. The odds are too great for us, the ills of society are too deeply lodged, if we are to rely only on our own resources and our sharply limited sympathy and wisdom. But the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth! and if Jesus binds up human endeavors with His plans of love, even common folk can play an honorable part with courage.

Andrew Carnegie was a genuine lover of his fellow-men. He knew the seamy side of life and the hardships of the poor, and especially he hated war and all its grinding oppression, and its after-brood of miseries and hatred. He gave himself and his millions whole-heartedly to the cause of peace and human betterment. Early in life he gave complete allegiance to the first extravagant claims of Darwinism and the agnostic philosophy of Herbert Spencer. He seems thereafter to have shunned

all thought and speech of Jesus, as of one found somehow at the center of a web of imposture. He was satisfied that the human race was steadily developing, and that only knowledge was necessary to bring it forward to happiness and social stability. He sowed libraries all up and down the nation, confident of a harvest of human welfare and self-mastery for the common good. Then came the appalling out-break of the Great War! and—as his wife says in her pathetic preface to his life story—from then on his heart was broken. He never rallied from the shock. Till then he had kept the spirit and even the habits of a young man, in hearty enjoyment of all good sport. But his life-long hopes lay in ruins, his confident optimism was shattered beyond recovery, and he had no inner citadel of refuge.

Jesus builds men's social hopes and sympathies into the Eternal Love and Righteousness, as a lighthouse is dovetailed into the living rock. One may ridicule the presumption of such a confidence, but it was the warp and woof of the most fruitful life ever lived on earth. Year in and year out, Jesus gave Himself to the Kingdom of His Father, here on earth among men—undiscouraged by crushing odds, undismayed by death. And those few years of unquenchable faith have wrought more good for humanity than all the wise and prudent programs of cautious doubters through the centuries. Sanity is said to consist in the right interpretation of one's environment. Jesus counted His environment to be that of a great campaign of endeavor to bring to pass His Father's will in human life. He commends that interpretation to men of today. He calls all who believe in Him to a great constructive programme of love, ignoring the selfish interests of race or class. He cheers them with the convic-

tion that their Leader is God, that His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion endureth throughout all generations. We shall not lose our labor if we work with Him—we cannot come to old age and the end of our campaign of altruism with a broken heart.

II

Let us look more closely at Jesus' conception of a Kingdom of God among men, which He still puts in the mind and heart of those who believe in Him. When He first emerged from the long loneliness of the carpenter's shop at Nazareth, with the fresh enthusiasm of a young man eager to help His people, it is evident that He was a man with a message that burned like fire in His bones. He was not acting the part of the Messiah, or setting an example as the world's perfect man, or founding a new religion or a Church, but bringing to the people a message of glad tidings. He came with good news. We are left in no doubt as to what form it took. It was not the substitutionary atonement, or the doctrine of His own majesty as Son of God. It was the "gospel of the kingdom."

Plainly it was of tremendous concern to Him. For years He had been brooding over it in silence while He went about His work. His heart burned with pity as He saw the wretchedness of His people. He saw the dull misery of human life on God's good earth. And he felt that it was for him—"the carpenter's son"—to bring in a new day, to herald a new social order. He called it the Kingdom of God, or Kingdom of Heaven. Every countryman of His was thinking about it, as surely as an Irishman today is thinking about Home Rule. The na-

tional literature of His time, the so-called apocalyptic literature of the few generations before His day, centered about this national hope. The brief record of the synoptic gospel uses the expression over eighty times. Yet it quickly dropped out of sight. We do not find it in the writings of Paul or John. It belongs to Jesus Himself. But evidently to Him, in those early days in Galilee, it was at the very heart of His thought and teaching.

Probably the most difficult problem of New Testament study today is the problem as to just what Jesus meant by this message of the Kingdom close at hand. Did He mean what all His countrymen meant—the great catastrophe of the end of the age, to bring to a close the long drama of human sin and suffering by means of the last judgment and the destruction of the wicked, with all the dramatic setting of the coming in the clouds and the ingathering of the nations by the angels? Did He believe that His own generation was to see the great final deliverance, wrought by the wrath and power of the Almighty? Or was He thinking of a triumph of spiritual forces, creating a new order by bringing men into a new relation with God and their fellow-men? Was He looking for a long-suffering service of love to win men's hearts, or for a sudden victory by the slaughter of all unbelievers until—as the Revelation pictures it—blood flowed as deep as the horses' bridles? Even till today many good people are explicitly hoping for the latter, and sing joyfully of the day when He shall come "the lawless to destroy," and so crush all opposition and bring our difficult labors to an end.

We are confused by the fact that His own disciples, who recorded His words, obviously misunderstood His program for the future. It required the keen, far-reach-

ing insight of such a leader as Paul to make plain—even to so sympathetic a follower as Peter—the scope and meaning of Jesus' plan for the world. They expected Him to preach a patriotic and nationalistic gospel—in the language of today, 100 per cent Judaism, Palestine for the Jews, "pure Judaism." They did not understand that He came to give new meaning to the old submerged prophecy, "through thee shall all the peoples of the world be blessed"; not by a great catastrophic day of revenge and punishment, but by the triumphant working out of a spirit like His own, the spirit of "the suffering servant," in a patient ministry of love. That method can achieve nothing save with time, slowly and at the cost of endless patience and hope and forbearance—"first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear."

Yet it is beyond dispute that the thought and life of Jesus were keyed to such a program of divine sympathy as this, built up about the compassion of a Father, and not the insulted majesty of an Oriental sovereign. His nearest friends—like so many of His friends since then—would have hastened the day of better things by calling down fire from heaven on unbelievers. Jesus simply said, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of." He was working by different methods, so indirect and slow, as compared with the swift violence of cleansing fires, that they seemed forlornly ineffective.

This is not the place to discuss further this latest problem of New Testament interpretation. It is only possible to sum up the conclusion in which scholarly Christian thought is likely to rest, viz., that Jesus' central and pervading message of good tidings had to do with a new spiritual life. His fellow countrymen only too soon found out that it was not nationalistic or local or even patriotic.

It was not 100 per cent Judaism. It did not satisfy any of their fierce longings for the vindication of the law and the overthrow of its enemies. It was not orthodox, not Jewish at all—not even intelligible to a good Jew. It did not even throw on Jehovah the responsibility for vindicating by one almighty avenging judgment His outraged holiness, but seemed to leave to a pitiable company of feeble men and women the silly undertaking of winning a hateful heathen world through a gospel of love and divine forgiveness.

This seems to be the only conclusion in harmony with the broad certainties as to Jesus' life and teaching, that stand out unescapable, unmistakable, above all perplexing details. Not only the fact that he laid clear stress on the spiritual character of the kingdom as one already in the midst of them, subject also to the slow development of natural growth, working in ways of love and leading to moral ends—but above all the fact of his own consciousness as the Son of God sent to bring back the children to the Father. The consciousness of such a mission, so wonderful, so divinely tender, infinitely transcending all considerations of time or place or nation, dealing with the great underlying realities of human need and divine response, leave us no room for any other conclusion that does not land us in hopeless confusion.

III

What then was this vision of hope that drove Jesus hither and yon unrestingly among the villages of Galilee, preaching a new gospel to the poor? It was the vision of a new relation between God and men, that should transfigure life. The very best His people as a whole had

dreamed of up till then, was the hope of winning God's favor by fearing Him and keeping His law. It made them anxious and scrupulous, but it also made them proud, self-righteous, and intolerant. Always they had before them the kindling thought that they—one small Semitic tribe—were the people of privilege, the sons of the covenant. There was a contract between them and God. They had the sublime inheritance of the law, and as they kept the law so would God be good to them and confound their enemies. And so their very privilege made them selfish, arrogant, useless. All sorts and conditions of men hated them for their spiritual conceit and bigotry. And Jesus was one of them—a Jew!

Yet what He saw by faith was this! A new covenant between God and men! Not like the old, that was so human and even-handed and that we can understand so well—they to keep the law and He to reward them with blessing. That had worked out in the sight of all the world as a moral failure—it bred pride and legalism, while at the same time it was a weary yoke to wear, and after all failed of the purpose it had in view. Jesus told of a new relation between God and men, divinely one-sided and infinitely, overwhelmingly rich in mercy and power—yet thrillingly real and true. God was to go the whole way in meeting them in their shamed reluctance and perplexity. There was no more pretence of an evenly balanced exchange of virtue on their part and favor on His, than there was when the father ran to meet that disreputable hobo figure of his broken-spirited son, and put his arms openly around him and kissed him. It was a new proposal, not at all like any contract among men, but God-like in the glorious abandonment of its unpurchased love. Jesus preached good news of a king-

dom of love, whose King admitted Himself—nay, declared Himself—the Father of these common men and women of the country villages and city streets. And if any one pointed to the stain of sin on them, and the vice and avarice wrought into their lives, He only asked them to take His forgiveness and cleansing to the full limit of their need, and trust and love Him for his overflowing goodness.

It was a new message indeed! No wonder men could not understand it very well or believe it when they understood it. And so, in order to make it plain, Jesus lived among men to illustrate His Father's purpose, and died among men, by the side of the open road, to confirm and seal His message. And men have been thinking over it ever since, to try to understand it better, and to see what manner of kingdom this may be that is altogether built on the holy love of a Father for His children, and what sort of a social order it involves for humanity.

Think what it means to our generation, struggling desperately in the world-wide net-work of selfish interests, to catch the vision of this reality. To have the living spirit of Jesus wakening in the spirits of men and women everywhere faith in such a kingdom on earth. And not only faith in it, but passionate devotion to it, like Jesus' own. It goes without saying that everyone who believes in Jesus, really believes in this kingdom of heaven, here and now among men—the real presence of God; the operative power of his forgiving, redeeming love as Father of his wandering children; and behind all, the almighty purpose that His good-will shall triumph in the end, both in our individual lives and in the corporate life of men.

IV

A vision of love like this, wide as the world and passing no one by, is, of course, a social hope. It cannot be concerned only with the saving of individual lives. It sweeps away at once the old order of things amid which Jesus Himself grew up. Never again could there be the old proud aristocracy of godliness. The men to whom every one looked up in Jesus' town, the men of standing in the church, were men who despised the rabble as unclean, hated the Samaritan, and would not so much as eat with a Greek or a Roman—their piety was measured by their exclusiveness. They were proud of their prejudices, and of the gulf that separated them from the common world.

Jesus' new gospel shattered forever all idea of vested interests in religion, and left behind in ruin the old world of prejudice and caste and ill-will. While He lived He was the friend and elder brother of every man and woman in need, Jew, Roman, or Samaritan, clean or unclean. He said that God was like that, and that in His new kingdom every son of man—white or yellow or black—was on the same footing of dignity and privilege as God's child. The only possible social order, if this were true, is one of brotherhood; not only as between races, but between the mutually suspicious and hostile classes in our industrial society. The only possible basis is one of genuine mutual service.

The visible church has often treated this ideal as if it were pure moonshine. But Jesus gave His life for it, and wherever His spirit penetrates today, men begin to catch a glimpse of this plain, honest fellowship of

brotherly men. In the broad warm sunshine of our Father's love, the old, bleak selfishness of a society without God simply cannot exist. Where the gospel of the kingdom really penetrates, there begins to be a profound intellectual ferment, as men rouse themselves to inquire what it means to be their brother's keeper under actually prevailing conditions.

The place of Jesus in the life of today, then, is not at all that of a social reformer of the first century, the leader of a tiny, communistic group in old Jerusalem. As we apprehend Him, He is the spirit of eternal love applied to present-day conditions, and working through every channel of twentieth-century efficiency. Applied love might once have been content with the comfortable patronage of distributing coal and blankets to the poor. But today, how can an honest man fail to see that the principle of Christian brotherhood goes far, far back of superficial charities, back as far as the roots of justice and sympathy and intelligent comprehension of the other man's needs and wants, seeking patiently, by endless study and experiment, for the way of redress and economic equity in our complicated world? "The kingdom" means the love of God applied to the social world—the fact of a divinely created brotherhood recognized in face of a prevailing order of caste and hereditary privilege. To be sure, such leadership actually operating in society today means difference of opinion, and sharp antagonism, and the everlasting turmoil that attends on divine love in human society, like molten iron plunged in cold water. But how is an honest man to escape it if he believes in Jesus?

It is a matter of wonder and humiliation that the so-called church of Christ, for long periods of its history,

should have been untrue to the spirit of its Master so far as to bring measureless hurt to the very name of Christian. For example, the churches of the eighteenth century in England, both free and established, lived in the midst of the most shocking wrongs and abuses, without lifting voice or hand—as a rule—against the existing order. Creeds they had in abundance concerning the person and work of Jesus, but when John Wesley and his associates came in the spirit of Jesus to preach the simple gospel of the kingdom to their poor, some even among the clergy “sought to put him to death,” as men before had put to death his Leader. The doctrine of love honestly applied to human need filled them with fear and anger, so cruelly did it expose their hollow, selfish formalism. But Wesley and his followers, seeing a work to do, “flung themselves upon the task of saving England.” And presently, under the influence of Jesus, the great organizations of sympathetic love for the neglected began to spring up everywhere, like violets after a rain.

One simply cannot come in touch with the spirit of Jesus without hearing His call to this brotherly solicitude for all men. One may join the church, or become a very “prince of the church,” and yet live in selfish preoccupation. But to believe in Him—just in proportion to one’s loyalty—is to be rooted and grounded in love. As one of the earliest friends of Jesus said, “We love, because He first loved us.” Every day, as one reads the newspapers, he sees—without noticing them—fresh illustrations of this principle. It works out the same whether in New England or in lands just being reached by the teachings of Jesus.

For example, here is Mr. Shinjiro Omoto of Matsuyama, a Japanese prodigal son. As a young man he was

banished from home for his drunkenness and immorality. In an attempt to break up some special services that Christian missionaries were holding in a theatre, he was himself attracted by the message of Jesus, and after sundry trying experiences became a Christian. He took work in a cotton-spinning factory, in order to earn a living, and advanced rapidly to an important position. But his heart ached for the thousands of young girls employed in factory life and compelled to live under disastrous conditions morally. It was not his business to interfere in the matter, but like his Master, he saw these friendless waifs distressed and scattered like lost sheep. He started what he called a "Sympathy Society," a sort of night-school, where the girls could have wholesome recreation, and add some common studies to their play. This was soon over-crowded. Mr. Omoto saw that little could be accomplished so long as the girls were compelled to herd together in the common lodging houses. Some sort of a Christian home was needed: and this he started, in a humble way, by the aid of American missionaries. Five hundred girls enjoyed the shelter of this home in its first five years, and so successful and appealing was this humble experiment that it attracted wide attention and has borne fruit in various ways in other factory centers. Mr. Ishii's noble orphanage at Okayama grew from a similar seed of Christian sympathy.

Such illustrations of course could be multiplied without end: and while the tale was being told, new activities of living helpfulness would spring up over night, as freshly awakened souls took up their birthright as sons and daughters of God, obedient to the leadership of Jesus Christ. But the point to be noted is, that for this living fountain of social renewal our generation is directly in-

debted to the gospel of the Kingdom held up by Jesus Christ. It is, one might almost say, far more a gospel for the twentieth century than for the first, because better understood, more widely proclaimed, and more efficiently applied. It has the advantage of a thousand years of experimentation. It works divinely well. Is there anything else in the whole tormented field of the war more reassuring, more shiningly victorious over human weakness, than the Quaker ministry to the hungry children of Germany? Unadvertised, silently and all but secretly, they have been feeding 700,000 children daily, in as many as 5,000 feeding centers. And the deed, so in keeping with their history, has sprung directly from their vital contact with Him who said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of these least, ye have done it unto me."

This is the fact to be noted, that the place of Jesus in the life of today is one of tremendous and immeasurable consequence for good-will among men, and for applied sympathy in forms as various as human needs. Our world is seething with intellectual activities, and economic and social theorists and reformers fill our ears with their ever-new proposals and appeals. Many of us are too timid to mention the name of Jesus in such scholarly company, lest we be smiled at as antiquated or conventional. And yet it is the spirit of Jesus that is actually incorporating millions of men and women in a kingdom of world-wide fellowship of love and service that has its assurance of permanence and success in the almighty will of God. Their unquenchable activity is the witness to the continuing kingdom of God on earth. Full in the face of human distrust and bitterness and opposition is this holy, loving, redeeming will at work to bring about a brotherhood of men rooted in the supreme wonder of the

Fatherhood of God. As Benjamin Kidd has recently said, "Jesus is the center of the greatest power system which has arisen in history." Even in university circles one does not need to patronize Him, or mention His name with apology. One might as well apologize for any other mysterious primal force, like that of atomic energy.

Thousands of happy people were leaving last week for over-seas. But among the crowd on the dock at San Francisco was a little group of six young people on a peculiar errand. They were ordinary Salvation Army soldiers, leaving home for a term of seven years' service in leper settlements in the Far East. Perhaps they would return, perhaps not: but it was a cheery, hopeful party. Possibly money could have bought so lonely and repulsive a service, possibly not. But it was not money they were thinking of. It was the love of Christ that warmed their hearts with pity for outcast, suffering brothers and sisters across the sea. Class-room and arm-chair reformers of society are easy to find. But those who actually go down into the pit for a lifetime, as did Gen. and Mrs. Booth with the children of despair and misery, are, so to speak, purchased with life-blood.

And here is this peculiar yet inseparable quality about the spirit of Jesus, that underlies the whole structure of His kingdom today. The "friendly community" of well-disposed and mutually helpful people is not the whole story. Good-nature and generous sympathy and tolerance are not the only forces that are demanded. Very much of our thinking and writing about the pleasant theme of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, the leadership of Jesus and the universal duty of social service, leaves out of sight one necessary element that Jesus never lost from sight. One word is missing—the unwel-

come word "cost." Every day of Jesus' life was saturated with the thought of God, and of His fatherly love, so willing to sacrifice to prevail over human sin. Here is where the urgency and the solemnity, the mystery and the power, of the teaching of Jesus about the longed-for Kingdom of God, find their explanation. He knew what the Fatherhood of God costs—what the Brotherhood of Man costs—what the actual saving of a lost man or woman costs. His effort to realize it in His own ministry made Him, for all His attractive quality, a man despised and forsaken, acquainted well with grief.

In the race for comfort and wealth and ease today, what is it worth to have a Leader like this, just next us in spiritual contact, to hold us true to such a kingdom? To link us up with the purposes of God, while we must yet live shoulder to shoulder with avarice and all selfish lusts? That is the place Jesus fills in this year of the twentieth century—of one who does in fact make men and women a part of the army of love, of the working Kingdom of God. He cuts a man clean away from disloyalty and indecision, as with a sharp sword. His call leaves no room for any lingering insubordination at any point—as by tolerating secretly the indecency and dishonor of popular up-to-date novels and plays and social standards. Not because those who believe in Him set up to be better than their neighbors, but because they know themselves to be the children of a holy God. One purer than their mothers, truer than their fathers, the very heart and source of worth and goodness, They are to be unhesitant as Cromwell's Ironsides, as soldiers of a great purpose—a purpose oft assailed, perhaps often shaken, but never to be laid down till dishonor is to be preferred to death.

So, even though Jesus is still despised and rejected of men, we seek Him out today, only fearing lest any cool altruistic purpose should come between Him and our heart's devotion.

CHAPTER VI

JESUS AS AN OUTSTRETCHED HAND

There is one reason above others why our modern world will not let Jesus go: because in Him men actually find an outstretched hand of help. They may not be able to argue very well about the psychology of religion, but they will cling to the hand that raised them up out of the shame and darkness of moral defeat. A group of men sitting pleasantly about the table over the coffee and cigars will discuss the problem of racial prejudice with cool, academic reserve. But if one of them were lying on a heap of stones by the roadside, beaten up by thugs and thrown out of a car to die, and a friendly Chinaman were to raise him up, and bring him bewildered back to consciousness, and bind up his wounds and carry him to a place of safety and rest and nursing—all at the risk of his life there in the lonely night—he will have had at least one experience of social solidarity, of which he will never be able to speak without deep feeling. And there are millions of common people who feel just in this intense, unreasoning way about the spiritual leader who is still despised and rejected of men. As Pascal says, "the heart has its reasons of which the world knows nothing." They cannot discuss critical questions about documents, but they have felt the healing touch of divine pity and out of weakness have been made strong. What they feel to be God's help has reached them in an emer-

gency through their faith in Jesus; and always afterwards in life they feel toward Jesus as one must feel toward a friend who has shown him unforgettable kindness. There are all sorts of kindnesses, but this is of supreme excellence in that it lifts one up toward God. For sensitive souls there is the thrill of love in it, as well as power, and it binds their spirits in loyalty to him ever after, so long as they have any being. Learned men may discuss in the religious press whether or not the church is losing its hold on modern society: and often the reason is obvious enough when it is losing hold. But does any one suppose that common folk throughout the world are going to let go of Jesus if he actually brings them to see and share God's life, in spite of their sin?

Browning, in his "Epitaph of One of Nero's Slaves," puts in his mouth the familiar words:

"I was some time in being burned:
But at the close a hand came through
The fire above my head, and drew
My soul to Christ, whom now I see."

"A hand came through." So Jesus dawns even on the sophisticated life of our day. When the eternal mystery breaks through from God to human eyes, it is as a hand stretched out to help. When the ultimate, unknown power beyond the universe would make Himself better known to men, it is in this winsome form of one who came to do what a mighty friend might do for human life. Not at all as once in the long past when "out of the fire and blackness and tempest came the voice of words, which they that heard entreated that no word should be spoken to them"—when even Moses "did exceedingly fear and quake."

Thank God! those days of dull understanding have passed away. For long ages men in every land had "stretched lame hands of faith, and groped, and gathered dust and chaff." But when the glory of God dawned like the morning star on human life, men saw it in the face of one meek and lowly in heart, a man himself made perfect by suffering, that he might be the Good Physician for all time, a man who called himself the Good Shepherd of the straying sheep, and who went deep into the wilderness and the mountains to find and bring home such as had lost their way.

"And none of the ransomed ever knew,
How deep were the waters crossed,
Nor how dark was the night our Lord went through,
Ere he found the sheep that was lost."

The simple words touch the profoundest depths of human consciousness. Men interpret God through that undaunted Shepherd, and know that He is very good.

We shall best understand what place remains for Jesus in the life of today as the revealed sympathy of God, if we look inquiringly at His behavior when He lived for a little while in the sight of men. To be sure, we are familiar with it all, but one never refuses another look at a beautiful painting, to say nothing of a beautiful life. And almost at once, in the first chapter of the story, we see Him in His most characteristic gesture and action. A loathsome and disgusting figure thrust itself upon His notice—a leper banished from the common haunts of men. He did not ask for money, but for what no money could buy—a clean body, at rest from pain. What did Jesus do? He did not do what you or I would have done, or what any other man of His race would have done to

this lonely wretch, unclean and dangerous. By Jewish law and custom the leper was cut off from common life, and from any close approach to his fellows. Cursing and cruelty were his life-long portion. But Jesus stretched out His hand and *touched* him—as a brother might—as God might—lingeringly and lovingly, unafraid, as one sent to meet him there and draw him out of hell. Surely, the leper saw God looking out through Jesus' face!

Would that we might have seen and read what was in Jesus' eyes, and understood, so that life-long thereafter we might rest on such a God as that, loving Him heart and soul and mind and strength for His sympathy and understanding and compassion! But if we choose, we can meet men by the score today, commonplace figures on the street, who will say that Jesus has drawn them out of a worse hell than leprosy, and that they have seen and felt the pity and power of God through Him. The same hand has lifted them up. We need to remember this when men tell us that our generation has outgrown the need of Jesus.

Then, later on, we have the picture of Jesus saving a drowning man. His friend Peter, having leaped overboard from the shelter of the boat, and feeling for the first time the full force of the wind and the driven spray like hail, was just sinking below the frothing waves. Jesus caught him in a grip made vise-like by years of work with plane and saw, and drew him back to life. Peter's faith failed him just at the crisis, as it did at a deadlier crisis, later on. He miscalculated his courage, and was going under. And just at the moment of terror—terror of death or worse—a great pitying love reached out to him by a man's hand and saved him. The hand

was that of Jesus—but the understanding sympathy, quick to help, was that of the Father of our spirits, in whom, unseen, we live and move and have our being. If such a hand could reach to a tempted young fellow in our city streets today, there would be a place in the twentieth century for Jesus still, would there not!

And then again we have the scene where Jesus stood looking down at the bed where lay the little daughter of the home, dead. Father and mother stood behind Him, awed and silent, and His three friends helpless to aid or comfort. But He in whom the power of God was, reached down and took her hand in His, calling her, and watched the tide of life flow back, and when her hand was warm again, He lifted her up, and left her to her parents.

It must have been an inexpressible joy to him to do this thing, because it summed up visibly the very spirit of His mission. When God reaches through to touch men with fatherly sympathy, it is that they may have life and have it abundantly. So Jesus Himself said. A few years more or less under the sun is nothing by comparison, and yet it is a stunning marvel to see the body's lease of life lengthened out unexpectedly even by a hand's breadth. But just as the soul is greater than the body, so it is a greater thing by far to put within the soul the conscious power of an endless life, or to cleanse and vivify and widen its capacities here on earth. And this is what Jesus obviously was doing for His friends and acquaintances when He was with them. He stretched out a hand of beckoning invitation to a couple of local fishermen whom he knew—James and John—and led them on and up until, instead of being village fish-pedlars, they became "friends of all the world," lifting men up toward God. He saw that fearsome madman among the

tombs, and scattered his dreadful night, and sent him home in joy to tell what Jesus had done for him. He gathered little children in His arms to bless them, and when He died "with out-stretched arms in mortal woe," they were flung out in sheer love as if to embrace the world.

You could scarcely find an artist in our generation who would depict Jesus as a philosopher, with hands muffled in His robe. We reverence Socrates in such an attitude, but it would be curiously impossible and incongruous for Jesus. His hands are free and busy with service. Simply because He was not a philosopher but a Saviour, and the most untutored mind recognizes Him as such. He spoke the universal language of help and love, and its power and attraction are timeless. The Russian Soviets could no more cast Him out of men's hearts than they could forbid men the sunlight. It warms and cheers. So does the glory of God as it shines in the face of Jesus. His voice may be drowned out for a little while, but presently it will be heard again, like the silenced chimes in Belgium, rippling now with joy.

II

But has Jesus lived on into our twentieth century, and is He as truly as ever He was an outstretched hand of heavenly love for needy men? Let any one answer, anywhere under heaven, from Oxford to Peking, who has sincerely turned to Him in faith that He would redeem, even from life's dregs. It is not fair to ask those who hold the coolly critical attitude of unbelief, because in the nature of the case the spiritual influence of Jesus can only be imparted by that contact of spirit which faith

affords. No more today than once in His own home town can He do any mighty works for those whose minds are closed against Him. But where men reach out to Him in the audacity of need, that hand responds. This is not the assertion of the church, it is the witness of human experience the world over.

This is what Francis Thompson, the poet, meant when he spoke of Christ walking not now on Galilee but on the River Thames. Thompson was one who knew by experience. He had almost gone under: he had drunk to the dregs the cup of sin and poverty and loneliness in London. To use his own words:

“In the rash lustihood of my young powers,
I shook the pillaring hours
And pulled my life upon me: grimed with smears
I stand amid the dust of mounded years—
My mangled youth lies dead beneath the heap.
My days have crackled and gone up in smoke.”

Yet it was he who wrote later:

“Yea, in the night, my soul, my daughter
Cry! clinging heaven by the hems.
And lo! Christ, walking on the water,
Not of Gennesareth but Thames!”

THE END

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